# THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Founded by Michael Allmand

EDITED BY NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

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SPRING, 1948
Volume IV Number 4

THE
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APRIL - JUNE
1948

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# THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Edited by NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

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# EDITORIAL

THROUGH the gay lilied fields, up the narrow cobbled streets and past the dusty high cathedral cities, Arthur Young wended his way, noting as he did so that the the magic of property turns sand into gold. The France through which he travelled, and which at this time was on the brink of revolution, was still preponderantly a land of small proprietors who, being too free and no longer harnessed to the soil as their grandfathers had been, were able to unite into a People's Army—thus making possible the defeat of the Allied Coalition Forces at Valmy in 1793. For the first time throughout a whole country the spirit of armed nationality was widespread and, within less than half a century, a parliament had sat at Frankfort in the name of nationalism ; the *ancien régime* had ended, whilst the old liberalism, going into a gentle decline, lay dying. A turning-point in both the political and economic evolution of Europe had come and the same year, 1848, saw not only the end of one age and the entry of a fresh era, but a shift of emphasis in which from then onward men came to be regarded more and more as part of the State, the gradual curtailment of their liberties being the price that had to be paid for the efficacy of such managerial emancipation. Of course it would be false to conclude that this transition took place in one year since history is not a mechanical process, but is conditioned organically, and for many contrary and conflicting reasons, over a certain period ; growth or disintegration is always the result of spiritual inward forces either gaining or losing ascendancy in men's minds and the schism which is apparent to-day between the closed society of the Soviet Union, together with its other satellite states, and the rest of the world is ultimately the result of a schism of the soul. It is as well a schism that, like a recurring factor but without such mathematical certainty, repeatedly comes to the fore in the course that civilizations run and which, with the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848, was so to say given a new impetus ; subsequently too, this schism has grown rather than receded, whilst as a subject it has already had a full spate of January centenary articles. It will not be the purpose of this editorial leader to trespass upon such ground, but instead to comment upon some of its side issues : the difference that exists between Christian and Marxist, between a vertical and horizontal approach to life.

Always and in every society spiritual, political and economic activities vie and jockey with each other for supremacy and although there is a continual tendency for one to dominate it is never to the entire exclusion of the other two. For this reason, if one wishes to assert

certain values—be they the values of literary criticism or metaphysics—it is inevitable that one must measure these values against a background which may be specialized in itself, but which can be seen in perspective as part of a much larger whole. It is for instance a great fallacy among modern educationalists in England to take a neutral stand with regard to religious instruction and, under the plea of being non-denominational, to adopt an attitude to dogma which is purely utilitarian. The danger of such pragmatism is that if dogma is neglected it will immediately and only too readily be assumed that it is an *auxiliary subject ;* an extra class to which young people may go, but which is in no way fundamental to the rest of their education. As Canon Spencer Leeson declared in his Bampton Lectures in 1944, the present is a time 'in which the training of the mind for purposes unspecified is made an end in itself', and it is a comment which is as true now as it was then.

Parallel to this attitude to religious instruction, and not disconnected with it, is that form of ingenuous journalism which drew forth in this country a fairly widespread and general belief that Zoshchenko was a Russian pornographic writer ; it is hoped that the article in this number, together with a facsimile of the original text of one of his stories, may stand as a corrective to such a mis-reading. It is again this same form of journalism which, because it may still see a number of churches standing in Warsaw with candles burning, will send back reports to the effect that the so-called Polish persecution is a myth and that the Catholic religion is not only tolerated, but flourishing. Now, whether this is actually the case or not, is beside the point because the point is that to see Christianity in such terms is merely to see it as a thing of ceremonies ; any relation that it may have to private morals is forgotten and its power as a means to salvation is ignored. Christianity, as in the Cowper-Temple clause of the Act of 1870, is once more relegated to a subject to be taught in the schools on fixed days and at set hours whereas its true province is over everything. Moreover, the principal danger inherent in this approach is that if secular knowledge is given precedence over the truths of religion, and it is not understood that political philosophy derives its strength from ethics which in turn derive their sanction from religion, then the political and economic administration carried through by the members of such a society will be that of citizens attempting to build a world of two dimensions in which one vital aspect will always be missing. Indeed, order can only come in a society which is both legal and religious—a *respublica* such as that spoken of by Hooker, in which the people of England are seen as a commonwealth comprising members who are both Churchmen and citizens of the State. Any other society which does not have this triple relation between Individual, Church and State must be unsatisfying exactly to the extent that it is lacking in this trinity, for it is the united strength of these three bodies in any one society which has always been one of the main fears of Communism.

Another fear of Communism is that education leads to inequality—the inequality of individuality. Its results cannot be standardized because men do not have equal talent since, as it is in the nature of things that there should be progress, it follows that this very inequality of individuality is largely what determines man's measure of success. So it is the universities are looked upon by the Russians with the deepest suspicion, not only because they lead to a higher form of education, but because it is more than possible that those who arrive at them may begin to question the whole Marxist conception of man. In the last issue of *The Wind and the Rain* it was shown how in the Russian zone every effort is being made to beat down Germany's intellectual bastions and now, more recently, in this zone it has been announced that only the grandsons and not the sons of members of the university class may be entered as future students. The reason is obvious: it is another full-scale attempt to make sure that by forcing such vacancies to occur these places may be filled by the workers, thus causing a class to arise which, since it has not been intellectually educated for the university, will only use the university as a means for acquiring knowledge about something within its own practical orbit of experience—stock-breeding, for example. In time, if the plan succeeds, the agricultural faculties will predominate and the number of legal students will accordingly depreciate so that a question like that of Otto Von Gierke as to whether law is the common will that something *shall be*, of the common conviction that something *is*, will be banished from the horarium. By degrees there will be less questioning about such fundamentals of jurisdiction and eventually these 'quibbles' may be forgotten in the complete immersion of serving the state; the formula is ready-made, and it is only a case of applying it where opportunity affords.

In Poland it is a similar story. There the same methods are being employed and, concomitant with their inauguration, the whole standard of education is being lowered. An article in the Polish Socialist Weekly, *Odrodzenie*, tells its own tale: the writer is M. W. Sokorski. 'Until now the Polish Universities have been a fertile ground for every unscientific theory, racial theories included; but only with difficulty, with the greatest effort, does the philosophy of historical materialism strike root there. How can the young generation come, not only to know but to love its own Polish way, to Socialism when it is taught to think anti-dialectically?' This form of propaganda is not surprising, especially when one remembers Stalin's dictum that 'words are one thing, actions another' and that 'good words are a mask for the concealment of bad deeds'. Only in the last century Engels said in a letter he wrote to Marx: 'The more I think about this business, the clearer it is to me that the Poles are *une nation foutue*, a serviceable instrument only until Russia herself is swept into agrarian revolution. From that moment Poland loses all *raison d'être*'. Certainly, history has shown him to be right in his prophecy, but there is always an end to materialist

exploitation, for it is stock whose capital is always diminishing rather than increasing and which is where the main difference between Christian and Marxist lies.

The Marxist stands for a human end, a temporal end. His way of life is always horizontal because he is aiming towards a human millenium in which he is prepared to be ruthless, even to the point of self-sacrifice. With the Christian it is otherwise, because he sees life as only an education, a preparation for a death which will lead to a fuller and eternal life. His decisions are not viewed materially, but vertically in which, looking upward, he sees the City of God as his ultimate goal, where truth is its king, love its law, and eternity its measure. He belongs essentially to a pluralist society, and a pluralist society because it is free, and not a closed society, permits men to develop to their full height—even if it occasionally may be in the wrong direction, for it is the cost of freedom that some will abuse it. In 1828 Lord Brougham in a speech to the House of Commons commented : 'Education makes people easy to lead, but difficult to drive ; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave'. The truth of his statement is one which daily becomes more apparent, but which for all its urgency is far too much neglected : by Christians on the one hand, because they are often too engrossed in their own belief to give heed to considerations other than those which appear to have a strict bearing on faith or morals ; and on the other hand by those who are so immersed in politics that their attention is exclusive to the point of dismissing all else from their minds. In either case the danger of such insularity is that it becomes a fetish, whilst the way for an advance from Prague to London, bringing Rome and Paris within its sweep, is made easy ; the catch-cry, 'Proletarians of all lands, unite', becomes a chorus of shouts threatening to engulf all for the very reason that those with whom the power of remedy lies are either too keen busying themselves about parochial matters, or too infused with party politics, to see burning questions such as education at one remove. Parochiality always breathes an air that kills, and it would be a pity if the tragedy of the last hundred years which is the tragedy of Marxism should through a lack of religious belief and civic responsibility lead to a sequel : to the tragedy of Christendom. Yet if that belief and that responsibility can once more be shouldered, and a sense of moderation be preserved, then there is still some hope that it may still be prevented

## REVIEWERS

Those who have contributed 'selected notices' to Volume IV of *The Wind and the Rain* include : Brian Coffey, F. C. Copleston S. J., Alick Dru, D. J. B. Hawkins, Elizabeth King, W. F. Jackson Knight, Hermann Peschmann and the Editor.

# FROM CORRADO ALVARO'S DIARIES

[Corrado Alvaro led almost a year of semi-fugitive existence in German-occupied Italy. Living under an assumed name, he recorded his experiences, impressions and momentary reflections in a diary, which on several occasions he was obliged to tear up or burn, and then begin again in securer circumstances. He published what remained of it in June, 1945, and from which here are some extracts].

*April*, 1944

. , . Now I understand what hope is. I imagine my life to-morrow, all work and receptivity, and do so in order to put the time that is left me to better use than I did in the past.

(*Palm Sunday.*) When C. gave me a spray of olive I couldn't repress my tears, and started to sob. I had to hide those tears of mine as if they were some shameful illness.

Having to teach, I gain a closer knowledge of the classics and of Latin. What fascinates me most is that faculty for not saying everything, which is the classic virtue, the cause of that vast resonance which their words have, and which sets the whole fantasy in motion, giving us a pleasure proportionate to our experience. For example, the IVth Book of the *Aeneid*, which I am translating with one of my pupils, or the *Divine Comedy*. There are certain passages which overwhelm me, as if they were constructed from a former life of my own. I can understand how terrible it must be to have dreamt life; the same feeling as that which one must have when face to face with death. At the end of it all, I tell myself, I had come to a wretched pass, reduced to the universal level, planed away by the common stupidity. I hope this receptivity will be fruitful.

Dante is full of the memory of the things that are lost and gone, of places once dear, of the ways we have travelled, then lost, then found again, of meetings never to be repeated, of all that which composes 'the dream of life', as it appears to me to be. Those are just the things which one understands in exile. At one line especially my eyes filled with tears in front of my pupil: 'And do you set fast your hope, dear son'. [*E tu ferma la speme, o dolce figlio.*] I have marked them all in the margin, those lines that breathe nostalgia and hope.

The scenes that take place in the flat below over the evacuated peasant Michele. In the beginning they welcomed him, with an eye to profiting from the flour and vegetables he had brought in order to set up house in the town. Now they treat him badly, seeing

that he has no more to give. Generally speaking all the local middle-class people have treated the ' country bumpkins ' in the same way. The professional class, with the footing it has in the police, the hospitals and the courts, has become the new feudatory of these poor folk. It has spent the whole winter arranging things so that the wretched peasants, who took refuge here, will have to leave, turned out into the snow, for the *petits bourgeois* were afraid they would be evacuated themselves.

And turned out the peasants have been, with their belongings in bundles on their heads, their children in their arms, and their dead buried in haste. The very Germans were astounded at such a lack of solidarity. And now the professional people go in fear and trembling of being turned out themselves, without having realized that the first lot of evacuees will facilitate the business of bringing about a general evacuation.

The professional people have held a religious procession of thanks-giving and supplication, beseeching that they should be spared evacuation. All the provincial clergy were there, and all the best people in town. The poor folk are wandering the roads of central Italy, bearing the real cross.

Life is nothing else than creating every day's varied moments. Anyone who can no longer create them himself, but has to undergo them already made by others, like a boy who has been lodged out with strangers, knows that well enough.

Of D'Annunzio we have left what they teach us in the schools, plus that talent for not expressing things outright as they are, but by means of roundabout phrases and amplifications. I must see to what extent our own particular brand of hypocrisy has found a codified formulation in him, and study some theatrical character of his type.

They are all opposed to the (Fascist Republican) regime in this province, but in a discreet clerical way. If they sense that you are someone genuinely opposed to it they are horrified and run away from you. Excepting the common people, who understand what this ' liberty of man ' is. Any Germans who turn up by chance despise the regime. They usually remember the ' Herr Professor ', and when they come back on their way to the front they send to ask for me. Taken singly they are poor soldiers, like all the poor soldiers in the world. One of them comes almost every week to ask me what news there is. But generally they only talk about their home town, their house, their mother, their wife—each one about his own folk.

People brought up among the flocks and herds who have read a little. They pose as persons of refinement, but the only tradition they continue is that hostility of their kind in Italy towards a civilized

mode of life. That pretty well sums up the history of a lot of Italian literature and criticism during the last decade.

The way they speak, putting vanity and false patriotism before everything. They say ' our country ', and they mean themselves ; they say ' liberty and independence ', and they mean privileges and salary. And the Italian can be sophist enough to deceive himself, and genuinely believe that he is thinking of his country and liberty and independence.

I must think of art again, its secrets and its patience. Anyone who renounces it after having known it is mad, for it suffices for everything and is a consolation for every unhappiness.

A provincial capital which has been in a state of decline for some time, full of useless, bored people, devoid of subtlety and the finer feelings, without any aim or object in life. The only person who could reanimate them and restore a little of the warmth of life to them and the complexity of a living world, is someone who works. The old feudal class has become a bourgeoisie of functionaries, maintaining its power by the credulity of the peasants, who are always in need of stamped documents, letters of recommendation and certificates.

Preoccupations with matters of form and a fear of being made little of dominate the minds of the Germans. When fifteen of their soldiers were billeted in a house, their officer came to inspect their quarters and lodged a demand for pictures to decorate the walls. The owners of the house made a round of the town, and scraped together a mixed collection. The officer in ——'s house asked for a hanging which she had in her bedroom, promising to give it back to her when he left—in the meantime he had to decorate his room. Officers never open the door in the usual way when entering their quarters or someone else's house. They kick them open. Some of them are expert ; with a single kick they can open the most securely shut door, and in they come without ever dreaming of asking leave to do so. I saw one entering a doctor's house in that way. Apart from anything else, he had been invited to dinner there. They requisition everything they come across, and give you a chit with ' Payment from Badoglio ' written on it.

Perhaps the literary vogue of these recent years for childhood reminiscences was a symptom of an epoch drawing to a close.

Even as a child she can't stand a man being absorbed by books, just as later on, when she is a woman, she will be jealous of the immoderate, impassioned way in which men cultivate their pursuits. A sense for the practical, which makes them hate every flight of the male towards the abstract.

The type of provincial who sees intrigue, cunning and deceit everywhere. He has unpredictable reactions, in which one can note the effect of the past 22 years. He sees the whole world as a kind of neighbourhood, and reduces everything to the kind of drama which could take place in his own wretched backwater. Which is exactly the thing which they have been inculcating for these last 22 years

They have wakened up to the fact that the dinners they gave the Germans were wasted. Having wined and dined the latter are demolishing everything. For days the mines have been going up. They are killing the work of so many years. It feels as if they were nailing down a coffin, demolishing the very land. Somnolent, the town lets it all happen. They are afraid of being liberated—a shell might bring down the house ; there might be demonstrations ; the Germans might turn revengeful—see how they're demolishing everything ; the criminal element might start taking it out of people, etcetera.

The Republican authorities were to have gone to-day, but the order has been countermanded. They have stayed, and are strolling in the street while the mines are exploding and the whole province is going up in the air. The gas is going up, the light, the water supply. But the evening promenade takes place as usual, and the gentlemen raise their hats to the authorities who are on their way out.

Do not attach yourself to the idea of success, but to your duty to express yourself as you are or as you would wish to be. You know how the little self-falsification of which you have been guilty has weighed on your mind. Do not think of the outside world, and don't lean on it for support. Live in yourself, for the people you love and for what you love in your country.

When all is said and done, life has an immense value during the moments when it is defending itself.

The German killed by the population. He might have been nineteen, and must have been tall. They say that the tears which he wept were still on his face when he was dead. He was one of the covering section whom I saw coming up, tattered and worn out, in front of the Italians who were beginning to appear. They stopped on the road that runs round the town, and set up their machine-guns on the low wall there. Then they moved off, for they had to blow up the road. A subject for meditation, this poor soldier who expiated the crimes and sins of his nation.

The last minute heroes are showing themselves in the light of day. One of that variety, who had always stayed at home, and who tagged on to the partisans when they came down from the mountains, was able at last to discharge a rifle in his courtyard and alarm the whole household.

The taint of Fascism, how much or how little the young have of it yet. An eighteen-year old student came looking for me, and began to talk to me about our 'native land' in the Dannunzian manner; as if our native land was a fine expression, and not a patrimony to be defended.

*Translated by* GEORGE CAMPBELL HAY.

## POEM

[*In the Spanish civil war, during August, 1936, two Carmelite Friars were killed, dismembered and mounted on pikes beside an out-door Statue of Our Lady*].

And if by some inscrutable decree,
Disgraced were my torso to adorn my Queen,
Should not my happiness out-joy the joyous most?
Sharing in Her Compassion for the Lord of life,
That agony of love by which She, living, died,
And máde a gift of life to Him that lives?
Whó could conceive in hate to honour so
This slave of my desiring? Who?
Who counsel him to confiscate my arms,
And think to bar me from Her favour in the lists of Earth?
That robbed me of the powers of man, and thus
Informed my torn remains as if with execration of Her Name?
Hé, who thought to do me greater harm than I forgive
Is to a failure forfeited; that, shorn my limbs,
Has raised me up to make a jewel for my Mother's crown!
Hé, against the dart of his desire,
My greatest favour stood to gain, when he
Bestowed this gift unthinkable, and honoured Her,
Who tells me more of joy than ever in the mirage of my dreams I saw;
More of mystery and light than all the skies
Conceal . . . And so, O Mother, Maid and Queen,
O Lady, fair beyond comparison,
While thére beside Thy figure as by art conceived
Stands stíll, decaying, empty, thát which once was me;
The ruins of rich hopes, the debris of desires
To do great deeds for Thee, if so to win
The favour at Thy feet to kneel, my soul doth share
The glory of Thy holy arms; where it shall rest
With Thee in constant supplication to Thy Son,
For him that was for me the instrument
Of happiness.

ERIC P. WHEELER

# TIME'S DEATHBED

VERNON WATKINS

I went to bed with time.
Through the blue dark, sublime,
I watched Orion rise
And all the stars' fireflies
Through distance climb.

Quite still I lay awake,
Hearing time's spectre make
Dynastic moan, more far
Than midnight's millionth star,
For love's dead sake.

Softly the curtain flapped
As though a ball had dapped
And then bounced out again;
And through my brain
Thoughts travelled and were trapped.

The universe enshrined
Stared from my mummied mind;
I heard my beating blood:
One near me stood.
I smiled inside the wind.

I listened. Time like sand
Slid through a hidden hand;
Although no step was heard,
It seemed a shadow stirred:
My dark was manned.

Then, while I listened still,
A voice from near the sill
More low, more wavering
Than curlew's call in Spring,
Made my flesh thrill:

'Possess new time, possess
New time, or nothingness.
The spoils of sleep
That other gives. I keep
Spoil-spurning nakedness'.

Desire contended there
With one so fair,
My pulse stopped as I turned
To that new life which burned
With upright hair.

Then sprang a sweat of fear,
For where soul thrust a spear
Blood rose immense,
The light was so intense,
The shade so near.

Then, when all thoughts were summed
And the small flies had hummed
Around the passive bone,
I gave so great a groan
That time was dumbed.

Deeper and far more tender
That groan to my life-lender
Floated, than songs of praise,
For the firm pulse of days
Was locked in my surrender.

Once more the Near One spoke:
'Lie still. Your fist then broke
The hour-glass that has cursed
Man from the first
With superstition's cloak.

Time built your room three-walled
Where Fear, a nursling, crawled,
But at the fourth wall I
Bring the starred sky
And the scented world'.

Confusion of the dark,
Snuffing of the spark,
Unclothed the shades
For which we had used spades
In the priests' sad park.

Confusion tenebrous
Brought spoilers covetous,
But naked in the sheet
It was uniquely sweet
To lie so generous.

# CROCE'S SIGNIFICANCE FOR CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

GEDDES MacGREGOR

SIGNOR BENEDETTO CROCE was born in 1866 at Pescasseroli in the Italian province of Aquila. He came of an affluent Abruzzese family whose seat his grandfather had transferred to Naples, where Croce was educated at a Catholic school. When he was seventeen he had the misfortune to lose both his parents, who were killed in an earthquake, and he was sent to live with an uncle in Rome, where he studied in the University for some time ; then, without taking a degree, he returned to Naples at the age of twenty. Being free from the obligation of earning a living for himself, and having a zest for literary and historical pursuits and researches, he was able to devote all his time to these without being hampered by the cares of a profession or public office. He exhibited little special interest in philosophy till late in his twenties, by which time he was turning to it by way of finding an answer to certain problems about history and literature which had puzzled him in the course of his wide reading and ardent enjoyment of them.

Such an unconventional *début* as a thinker has both advantages and disadvantages, as most professional philosophers will probably agree. In Croce's case it enabled him to consider, with ample reference to past thought but without having to think his way out of any traditional system, one particular question which had specially and increasingly interested him. This was the meaning, nature and place of art in relation to the rest of human activity. What was the true significance of the artistic in contradistinction to the intellectual ? The latter seemed to need no champion ; it had always been respected by thinking people, among whom its prestige was beyond all question. In the intellectual domain there was a certainty, a cogency, which made its position eminently secure, and natural science, by that time already making rapid strides, further enhanced its glory. What then of music and painting and letters ? Were they but noble toys suitable for the leisured classes who might enjoy them with the other privileges of their inheritance, adorning their social position with the graceful accomplishments of a cultivated taste ? Was the beauty of literature and art only an aristocratic luxury, something the pursuit of which helped to justify *noblesse* in peace, as valour in the field, according to Europe's old chivalrous tradition, justified it in war ?

For many reasons, art had rarely been taken very seriously in intellectual circles. Admired, enjoyed, even reverenced, by many

thinkers, it had been somewhat shabbily treated by them, and even the most courageous seem to have been half afraid of it, regarding it as one might regard an exotic religious cult in which one was intellectually fascinated without being in the least convinced. By the 19th century, educated people were tending more and more to want to adorn their environment with beauty much in the spirit in which a rich atheist might decorate his drawing-room with silver crucifixes and golden Buddhas ; they had gradually ceased to believe that art had a serious function in life, though they enjoyed the pleasure of it, and they readily contrasted everything connected with it on the one hand with the more ' solid ' fruits of logical thought on the other. Anything written about art from a reflective, philosophic point of view tended to be considered ' difficult ' even by trained philosophers ; as for the ordinary person or the neophyte in philosophic study, the subject was far beyond his powers. Some thinkers such as Hegel had tried to deal very seriously with the problem of beauty ; but these soared above the intellectual limitations of the ordinary educated reader when they talked about the philosophy of art, and the results of their inquiry on this subject were in any case widely deemed, not without good reason, to be somewhat far-fetched.

In the course of his first incursions into philosophy, Croce evidently hit on the right hypothesis about art. Was it not being treated as something far more difficult and abstruse than it was in fact, and was not this due to a radical error in the intellectual tradition of Europe ? The coherence of artistic experience would never be established by treating art as if it were an awful mystery, because it is not this, and the problem of beauty certainly would never be solved on any lines which made it so. Logical reasoning was securely established ; but might not there be something still more fundamental, some underlying logic, the discovery of which would give art the place it needed if it were to be intellectually justified ? Croce was specially influenced by two then somewhat neglected Neapolitans, Giambattista Vico, who had succeeded to a chair in Naples University about the end of the 17th century, and Francesco de Sanctis who, after imprisonment and exile by the Bourbon government, was Minister of Education under Cavour for some years just before Croce's birth. Both these Neapolitan thinkers had hinted at the solution which Croce worked out for himself. There was, of course, a widespread uneasiness about the status of art and letters throughout the 19th century ; not that anyone could really doubt their fundamental importance, yet all other human activity seemed to be vindicating itself more or less clearly in the eyes of the intellectual world, while the standing of these activities remained to be explicitly established.

After publishing some critical essays on history, literature and certain points of economic doctrine raised by Marx, Croce read a paper in 1900 to a learned Neapolitan society. It was on this paper about the philosophy of art that the *Estetica*, published shortly

afterwards, was based. This remarkably clever and original essay seemed to imply a philosophical theory which needed to be worked out in much greater detail in order fully to place it within a coherent method (for it is a method rather than a system) and Croce set himself the task of compiling such a method to which his aesthetic is but the introduction. On his view, aesthetics should be the introduction of all philosophy, for if philosophy were properly treated, aesthetics would be both its easiest and its most fundamental part. Croce has been widely recognized as a thinker of international importance ; Oxford bestowed her honorary doctorate in letters on him in 1923, and he has been similarly honoured by other universities ; he has held, though not during the Fascist régime, very high office in the Italian government ; nevertheless, his philosophy has roused considerable hostility as well as admiration throughout the very wide sphere of his intellectual influence. I do not suppose that anyone would question the originality and penetrating insight of Croce's acutely philosophical mind ; perhaps not many even among his adversaries would fail to admire the lucidity, even the success, so far as his thesis goes, of his aesthetic. Many of his readers, however, find that he seems to be too facile in disposing of difficulties which lie in the way of his theory. In England particularly, Croce has evoked opposition as well as interest.

Croce's thought is characteristically Latin in the sense that he is always logical and analytical rather than speculative, and to keep this in mind is a primary condition of appreciating the value of what he says. Ruskin, for example, evokes his scathing criticism ; for Croce simply has no interest, as a philosopher, in ' mystical beauty ' or dreams about other worlds which, he would say, are no business of philosophers. He believes it to be his function to discuss the beauty, truth, utility and goodness to be found within the ambit of our earthly experience, seeking not to understand how they come to be there, but rather to define and set forth how they are there in fact. When he invites us to consider our experience of beauty, for instance, he does not ask us to follow him into any mysterious, rarefied atmosphere of intricate speculation about other worlds. If we want to pursue this we must do it with the help of other guides ; only he would not call such a pursuit philosophy. What he does is to limit the generally accepted domain of philosophy to a comparatively small part of it. So he is agnostic about the metaphysical problems which many philosophers have accepted as among their main concerns. Metaphysics was so named by chance, because Aristotle's treatise on it happened to follow one on physics ; but it has come to mean for many that which transcends ordinary experience. Croce is inclined to laugh at such speculations and consider them otiose from a philosopher's point of view. This means, among other things, that he has no place for religion in his scheme of thought. However regrettable we may feel this to be for a full understanding of our human destiny, it was this very limitation in Croce's thought, I

believe, which enabled him to detect the true nature of art ; at any rate, it showed him how to isolate the artistic activity and exhibit it as having a coherence of its own no less perfect in its way than that of logical reasoning.

Croce recognizes such logical reasoning to be a part of the sum of human activity ; but it is an abstraction of something else rather than something fundamental and absolutely irreducible. It is irreducible and autonomous in the sense that it is an independent *mode* of activity, but only as grammar has a measure of autonomy, though based on speech. Grammar systematizes speech rationally, as a confectioner may systematize his wares by cataloguing and labelling them according to a rational system. But in all such cases there is something more fundamental than the process of rationalization : below grammar there is the act of speaking, and below the systematic arrangement of sweetmeats there is their individual manufacture. Looking at experience as a whole, and recognizing the activity of logical reasoning as a plainly defined part of it, Croce places underneath it what he calls the aesthetic activity. To sing, to paint, to write poetry, involves this, just as to discuss trigonometry involves the logical activity. That underlying activity is the imagination upon which the intellect works when it makes its abstractions of logical thought, and without which the intellect could not exist, any more than the systematic arrangement of sweetmeats could exist without the sweetmeats.

Traditionally, the term ' aesthetic ' has been used to denote two supposedly very different kinds of fact. In the first place, it is commonly used to describe certain qualities to be found in objects, namely, those which elicit our admiration on account of what we call their beauty. Such qualities we say are aesthetic; we distinguish them from other qualities such as utility. In this sense the term ' aesthetic ' tends to approximate to the term 'artistic', though we should hardly apply the latter term to the beauty of natural objects such as mountains and peacocks, except to the extent that we thought of an artist reproducing them with his brush or pencil. This is the ordinary, everyday use of the term 'aesthetic'. But in the second place there is another usage, this confined chiefly to philosophic discussions. Here ' aesthetic ' refers to the sensory as opposed to 'noetic', which refers to the intellectual ; it was thus that the Greeks distinguished *aestheta* from *noeta.* Kant uses the term ' aesthetic ' in the first sense in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, when discussing the beautiful and sublime, then he holds these to be the objects of a satisfaction distinct from and higher than even truth and goodness ; but when in the *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* he entitles the first part of this work ' Transcendental Aesthetic ' he is using the term in the second of the two senses I have given. Now, Croce uses the term ' aesthetic ' in the first sense, and yet he puts the aesthetic activity, in this sense, in the place assigned by Kant to aesthetic in the second sense, that is, to perceptual, sensory knowledge as opposed to higher

mental activity. Kant, when he used the term in the first way, wanted to raise beauty to the highest peak he could find ; in using it in the second way, referring to sense as distinct from intellect, he put aesthesis at the bottom. Broadly speaking, Croce takes the view that the traditional distinction between the two usages is somewhat strained : the aesthetic, meaning the beautiful, is in fact at the bottom of experience, where Kant puts the aesthetic, meaning the sensory. (Aesthetic apprehension is not, however, according to Croce, necessarily spatial and temporal, as it is for Kant when by ' aesthetic ' he means 'sensory'.) But this apparent degradation of aesthesis, that is, of art and beauty, is in fact its exaltation : it is exalted in the only way in which anything can truly be exalted, that is, by getting its proper place. So art becomes not a high, ethereal mystery, but the basis, the bedrock of human life, the groundwork of all other human experience. One does not stress the importance of food by exhibiting it as something rare and ethereal ; one shows its true nature and function by pointing out that the body cannot survive without it ; it is not a high, mysterious luxury, but a lowly, plain necessity. So with art : it is the heart of life's experience, or, we may say instead, the very soil on the fertility of which all our other experience depends.

Here then, says Croce, are two modes of knowledge, the logical and the aesthetic, discursive reasoning and art. But besides *knowing*, man also *wills*, and to complete the circle of human experience Croce sets forth two other modes of activity, which he calls the 'economic', directed towards utility, and the moral, directed towards the good. The latter is related to the former in exactly the same way in which logic is related to aesthesis. So we have two pairs of modes, and the pair of ' knowing' modes is related to the pair of ' willing ' modes in precisely the same way that artistic and logical activity are related, on the one hand, and ' economic ' and moral activity are related on the other ; that is, knowledge stands below will—first we know, then we will. These four modes, according to Croce, exhaust all human experience, which is a unity in quaternity.

All this seems to make up a very tidy view of life ; but it is an entirely immanental one in which there is not only no place for God, but none for any mysteries either above or below the full stream of conscious human experience. Hedged on both sides by its inherent limitation, Croceanism is subject to the criticism of the modern psychologist bent on unearthing the secrets of mind at its unconscious level no less than it is to that of the Christian theologian whose faith in a transcendent God, taking him beyond the level of ordinary values such as human reason and human goodness, enables him to speak of a divine hand acting upon and within the current of human affairs. More simply, Croce's method is alien from both that of religion and that of science ; the scientist tends to dislike it as much as does the theologian. But we must distinguish in Croceanism between that which arises from the careful analysis of conscious

human experience, human values as the humanist finds them, and the wider structure which Croce builds with a view to establishing a completely self-contained and self-sufficient neo-idealist philosophy. This is only to do what theologians have for long been accustomed to do about the psychoanalytical account of the structure of the subconscious mind ; they distinguish the results which the psychologists obtain as scientists from those which they try to produce when they go out of their way to build a complete philosophy out of their psychoanalytical findings. If religion gains nothing by pretending to ignore natural science such as is modern scientific psychology, it certainly has nothing to gain by struggling to undermine or belittle humanistic attempts to arrange conscious human experience and values in an orderly manner. To Croce the proper study of mankind is mind, meaning by this the activity of the human spirit however it may manifest itself. For him mind is reality. His attitude to God is somewhat like his attitude to the physical matter which engages the attention of the scientist : these things are outside our consciousness—how can we know them? Science has its answer; so has religion ; but a humanist, idealist philosopher like Croce is too much concerned with the analysis of conscious mind to care what scientists and theologians have to tell him about discoveries they profess to have made in realms beyond immediate experience.

The situation seems to me to be this : If I set aside all mystery and speculation, all scientific inquiry, and all religious faith, it may be impossible for me to account for my experience ; but I can analyse and systematize it, and here Croce can guide me. It is true that there may then remain some objections to the Crocean scheme even within these limits, notably from the side of moral philosophy, which may, for example, find the notion of a completely and ideally amoral will unsatisfactory ; but most of these are not grave objections, while many arise from mere lack of full appreciation of the limits. After all, there is no philosopher who gives nearly such a coherent and convincing account of the artistic fact as does Croce ; for an aesthetician to ignore him would be at least as absurd as for a moralist to ignore Kant, though it does not follow that we should let either thinker guide us to our destiny.

What we ordinarily call a work of art, such as Jean Goujon's ' Diana ' or Mantegna's ' Parnassus ' is, in Croce's view, extrinsic to art ; it is only a symbol, a piece of canvas or marble or wood. The work of art is in the mind, that of the artist and that of the beholder ; it is the activity of imaginative expression. There is no essential difference between the work of creation and that of our appreciation ; to the extent that I truly appreciate Botticelli's ' Madonna ' I am doing within my mind precisely what Botticelli did when he created that picture. Art is concerned with meaning, not with technique, which is only a practical question extrinsic to the expressive, imaginative activity. Art is image-making in the mind. I may express myself in visual or auditory or other kinds of

images, which may result in my writing poetry or painting frescoes or playing the piano ; but the essential characteristic of art is expression. How art is expressed matters no more to the fundamental character of the artistic fact than it matters to the essential nature of music whether the musical sounds issue from a stringed or a wood-wind instrument. Nor is the expression an expression of beauty ; it *is* beauty, completely identified with it, as is also art, in Croce's usage. This expressive activity is the most fundamental mode of human knowledge, by which I apprehend the individual imaginatively, intuitively, just as by the higher abstraction of logical activity I apprehend the universal reflectively, conceptually. In the very act of expressing myself imaginatively, I acclaim the expression beautiful. The ugly is that which has failed to express itself ; it is inexpressible.[1] The expressive activity, which is art, music, poetry, literature—in short, imagination—is the starting point of all human experience.

This, it seems to me, is a peculiarly important view for Christian thought to consider. Since about the middle of last century science has generally been depicted as religion's enemy, and though in many ways the hostility has lost point, it is still very real. But religion has a more ancient and deadly foe in humanistic philosophy, which may still queer the Christian pitch if Christianity takes up a false attitude to it, as too often it did to Victorian science. On the other hand, I think this humanism can also be religion's closest friend, provided that the latter makes it clear precisely how it stands in relation to humanistic values. The significance of Croceanism for Christian thought is that it presents human experience and values analysed in such a way as to give all a place in a coherent scheme with art at the bottom, as the root or starting point. Art has many affinities with religion. Its force, as Croce says in the *Problemi di estetica*, lies in its being simple, naked, poor ; its very weakness gives it force ; hence its fascination. Hence also, the Christian might add, its acute relevance to the Christian way of life.

Christianity both embraced and strove with music, literature, and every other form of art long before the war between science and religion had been even prognosticated. The imaginative and the religious contemplative always walk even closer together than do either the philosopher and the theologian or the ' good man ' of philosophy and the Christian saint, especially if, as I believe, Christianity must be a *theoria* before it can be a *praxis*. By showing how the imaginative is related to the philosopher and the ' good man', Croce unwittingly helps the Christian thinker to see one of his most difficult problems in perspective, and, if he is willing to face humanist claims honestly, to join hands with the humanist without

[1] In *Aesthetic Experience in Religion* (London, 1947) I have proposed (pp. 80 ff.) a way out of the philosophic difficulty this presents. [This work was reviewed in the Summer, 1947 number of *The Wind and the Rain*].

becoming either his enemy or his tool. We cannot get away from the structure of our conscious mind any more than we can escape the fact of our subconscious. Divine grace may perfect this structure ; it does not take it away.

The Crocean conception of history is however a very real stumbling-block from the Christian point of view. Christianity is itself a philosophy of history ; the birth of Jesus Christ is seen as the central fact towards which all antecedent and subsequent events are focussed. The Old Testament is best understood as a record of God's hand in history ; the Greeks saw in history the play of mighty forces such as Fate ; even Hegel could think in terms of a philosophy of history, and, as Croce reminded the Italian Senate in a speech a year before the outbreak of the first World War, Marxism is but a materialistic version of this traditional conception of history, substituting Economy for God and a primitive communistic state for the Garden of Eden, whither, by means of a more sophisticated communism, mankind, it claims, can return. For Croce, however, history is present reality. It is impossible to contemplate a self without a history ; I am what I have been, and so my history is my reality, and the whole of history is the whole of reality. A philosophy of history is thus impossible, because, since history presents to us mind, which is reality, it is identical with philosophy itself ; it is immanent in the fact that mind is fundamentally expression. Documentary accounts of human activity, such as Boswell's *Johnson* or the inscription on a church brass or the records of an academic foundation, are not history, but fragmentary though convenient symbols to guide the historian. The history of Dr. Johnson is Dr. Johnson's activity, as it lives in someone's present interest in it. Croce sees mind as both an unity and a diversity, an eternal solution to an eternal problem. The self-consciousness of this mind is philosophy or history, according to how one prefers to look at the question : philosophy and history are substantially one. Nor can we give value to valueless, unhistorical ideas, because there can be no question of subjective judgment on what is historical and what is not, since value itself is not judgment but expression ; it does not depend on existence—existence depends on it. The ' moment ' of history is marked by the judgment on reality ; but both judgment and history are inconceivable apart from value, and this emerges with the artistic, imaginative activity which is at the bottom of experience and does not even distinguish the real from the unreal.

Since Croce considers religion to be shorn of the transcendental element which is integral to Christianity, being nothing better than a second-class philosophy, it is plain that no Christian can possibly make terms with it as a whole. Christianity without a transcendent God intervening in human affairs would not be genuine Christianity at all. But without committing ourselves in any such way to the Crocean philosophy, we can find in Croce's quest for the vindication of art the humanist counterpart of the effort Christianity

has always had to make in every age to get back from a pragmatistically conceived religion to Christian contemplation. The connection between the religious contemplation of God and the artistic contemplation of beauty is close, and since all human activity has its root in the latter, Croce's analysis of the structure of conscious mind may help Christian thought to unfold in contemporary literature a more living interpretation of Christianity than that which commonly comes our way. That the *malaise* between Christianity and art should be healed is particularly to be desired, not least in a world ridden by pragmatistic conceits, a world in which the artist as such should be peculiarly ready to respond to the impact of divine grace. In our age, generally speaking, there is a strong tendency for true art to be suspected or belittled by the religion which reaches the current of ordinary human affairs, and this reveals plainly enough how tragically inadequate is the contemporary conception of the Christian message and way of life.

## NEXT TIME?

Would I had turned away
Without having witnessed this thing!—
Winter at the window of the young eyes,
Looking over the shoulder of Spring,
One instant, to-day;

Perhaps never to stand there again
Until the textureless face has become
Some furious sculptor's clay,
And, lit by a death unlike any the young may die,
Burns the last frost-fire Love.

FRANCES BELLERBY

# THE WITNESS BOX

## I.—*The Trial of Zoshchenko*

ALEC BROWN

The latest news from Moscow concerning Zoshchenko[1] was that at a Press Conference for foreign journalists held during some recent Moscow talks, Boris Gorbatov, a fellow novelist who enjoys an official position, stated that Zoshchenko had been suppressed because: 'for the past 25 years his work has given a distorted picture of reality, and reflected only the negative features of Soviet men and women'.

It is striking that it has taken the Communist dictatorship quarter of a century to discover how distorted were Zoshchenko's very popular pictures. But Zoshchenko himself, so Reuter's statement went on to say, 'had now realized his mistakes and was writing a book dedicated to the guerrillas of the Leningrad region'—which presumably means 'a book about the guerrillas of the Leningrad district'.

'If the book is a good one', Gorbatov is reported to have said, 'Zoshchenko will regain the trust of the people and re-enter the family of Soviet writers'.

This report that Zoshchenko is trying to cut his cloth according to the uniform specifications laid down is not at all surprising. Total suppression in a totalitarian state is a much more powerful weapon of force than suppression was under the sporadic and relatively less decided dictatorship of the tsars. We in Great Britain can only dimly assess what it means. Living for centuries tightly circumscribed by the sea we are not psychologically so obsessed by the lust to enforce uniformity with which a nation scattered very widely within, a vast, un-filled and ill-definable land-space is obsessed. There are admittedly activities for which we too proscribe men. A life of crime, interspersed with periods of penal servitude, makes it very difficult for a man in this country to exist legally. Moreover, criminal conviction can sometimes bar a man's return to his chosen profession. There are corporations in Britain which wield very great power indeed—the British Medical Council is the notable example, though not the only one. But even so, there are safeguards protecting the individual. Moreover, men are with us condemned for criminal acts, not for holding and expressing opinions. An auctioneer who is found to make a practice of rigging sales before the auction may cease for ever to be an auctioneer. But though in

[1] A Reuter report in *The Times* of April 7th, 1947.

this country the soundness of Darwinian and Mendelian theories is generally admitted, an auctioneer who insisted on expounding the ideas of Lamarck, or the thirty-nine articles, could not be brow-beaten into silence by cancellation of his licence.

Moreover, any such corporation in Britain exists within the State and solely regulates inner-professional matters. In the case of Zoshchenko it is a piece of the machinery of the all-embracing State itself that suddenly finds him guilty of ' mistakes ', and forces him to silence or publicly abject conformity.

Zoshchenko has allegedly admitted his mistakes, and is writing a new book in which he is trying to avoid mistakes. The State suddenly asserts that for twenty-five years Zoshchenko was wrong in his opinions. Zoshchenko admits that this is so, and is trying to be right in his opinions. He is writing a book with new and ' correct ' opinions. But decision as to whether Zoshchenko has or has not succeeded will no more rest with him when he finishes this new book, than it did when the State, taking twenty-five years, during which Zoshchenko was both freely and officially popular, to find out, made the first decision that he was not to be allowed to write as he pleased.

In other words, however much he ' repent ', Zoshchenko has clearly not undergone that revulsion of spirit which a free man may experience. It is not the change of opinion of a Tolstoy or Dostoievski who, though labouring under Tsarist tyranny, still had some freedom of expression. It is not really Zoshchenko saying : ' I see I have been wrong for twenty-five years—but here is what I now think is good writing '.

In other words, all this has been dictated to him. Less than six months since the state functionaries who control his very existence as a writer decided that the Pravda Press, Moscow, should print a popular 100,000 edition of his latest stories, these same outer forces suddenly discovered in him a sink of iniquity, and suppressed him —or what for twenty-five years had been him.

Shortly after the grandiose decrees which opened the latest mass purges were promulgated, there was a rumour in Paris that Zoshchenko the man had also been liquidated, that is to say, shot. That was crude anti-Soviet nonsense. As we now see, Zoshchenko had merely been deboned. In a few months, perhaps, in standard Soviet packing, a protein and calory balanced ration will be available in a standard canister, labelled ' Zoshchenko '. But with us, alas, will remain the corpse of another Zoshchenko. Some of us—I certainly was one—used rather to scorn that swift, bright small bird which flitted so gaily hither and thither, and seemed in his journalistic feuilleton way, to carry on the tradition of Gogol, Leskov, Chekhov . . . Meanwhile the broad public enjoyed him ; among other reasons, because he fitted so well into our unkempt English hedgerows, where the free singing of one's thought, though hampered by all manner of ginnes and springes, is still not *verboten*.

There is, nevertheless, no greater error than to judge one group of phenomena by standards evolved to measure some other set of phenomena. It is wrong—possibly—to apply our English standards to a world in which all individuals are so closely integrated as in the Soviet Union. It is wrong—possibly—to postulate some difference between a writer's world and the interests of the State in which he lives. It is right—possibly—to parrot official Soviet thought in identifying the Union of Soviet Writers primarily with writers, and not with the State . . .

In other words, it is right—possibly—to say : there can here be no distinction made between the action of the British Medical Council striking off a doctor for unprofessional conduct, and that of the Union of Soviet Writers striking off a writer for what it considers to be unprofessional conduct. There can be no distinction made—the action of the Writers' Union—possibly—is an exact parallel of a British Medical Council proscription—simply because the expression of views harmful to society also constitutes unprofessional conduct.

After all—so the argument might run—we all have some kind of restriction on the right of self-expression. We do not really question in Great Britain the prohibition of pornographical publications. And—thus the Soviet apologian—as a matter of fact, that was exactly the sin of which Zoshchenko was fundamentally guilty. This indeed has been made clear . . .

Not so fast ! It has not been made clear at all. By a well-orchestrated medley of pronouncements and comments, the impression has been widely given that Zoshchenko is an inexpressibly vulgar writer, finally descending to the compilation of indecencies. But it has not been made *clear*. Certainly not in the sense of Descartes' '*clear and precise*', or of the laws of evidence. Even were it true, it could not be clear to us in this country because the work on which the whole barrage of mud-slinging turns simply is not available to us. There is as yet no English translation of Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise*, and the rare copies which were once in the library of the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union are at best extremely difficult to obtain. Anyway they are in Russian, which still too few people read, so that most people could at best take the assertion as made in good faith and reliable.

It could not be made *clear*. Yet the impression is abroad that it has been made clear. The most favourable view of Zoshchenko now seems to be that he is a vulgar writer who, even if the treatment meted out to him is harsh, after all ' asked for it '. The whole case, instead of being enquired into, is, together with the verdict, taken over from Moscow. True judgment on it is therefore in danger of going, by default, to the accusers.

Even many of the sternest critics of the Soviet Union's methods have hitherto apparently supposed that Soviet official documents could be relied on to contain a basis of objective truth. With

commendable anxiety to present documents to the reading public, more than one of our publications has printed extracts from the official pronouncements on Zoshchenko and other condemned Soviet writers. The only thing they have not done is to doubt the veracity of the allegations to which they give publicity. Indeed, where for political reasons they sympathize with the Soviet regime, they have fallen into the trap (though these might not regard it as a trap), of drawing conclusions from them, without either verifying them or giving their readers an opportunity to form their own judgment.

On the other hand—nearly as bad—where the Editor has his own *ex parte* reasons for not approving Soviet methods, he also falls into the same trap. He is provoked into adopting the very procedure which he abhors. He attacks, not the condemned author, indeed, but the Soviet authorities, but he does so, pouring scorn on Soviet suppression of Zoshchenko, yet again, without verifying whether the initial allegation of fact made by the Soviet authorities was true.

Thus, *Horizon* condemned the suppression of some Soviet writers on sound, but abstract principles. It said, in effect: 'We do not approve of the suppression of writers'. Doing this *Horizon* failed to take up the real challenge to our civilization—not the suppression of a writer, nor even the arbitrary, authoritarian suppression of a writer, but the suppression of a writer for what he did not do. *Horizon* merely assumed that the Soviet authorities were wrong in taking action against an author's freedom of expression. On the other hand, *Modern Quarterly*, without seeming ever to have read Zoshchenko's novel, at least, so I understood the Editor to say in conversation, writes on the complete assumption that it was one which deserved condemnation.

This dichotomy of criticism into two totally opposed systems is in itself shocking and perturbing. There is behind such a dichotomy a tacit acceptance of the non-feasibility of discussion. Further, this acceptance of an iron barrier between the two worlds (I do not assert that it exists, I am speaking solely of acceptance of its rightness and validity) is having a shocking effect on what we might call intermediate opinion which would claim to preserve an 'open mind'.

What should having 'an open mind' mean? Surely, that until adequate examination of the facts has been possible, no decision, either for or against, is to be taken. But under the influence of the new totalitarian casuistry, which is the disease of our civilization, 'an open mind' tends to be interpreted as synonymous with a cynical attitude sometimes described as 'realism'. Therefore there is to-day serious confusion between preserving an open mind concerning a particular issue until such time as one can weigh the proven facts, and an attitude of aloofness concerning the facts. It is this attitude which makes it possible for the same man neither to endorse the tyranny of the Soviet State over freedom of expression,

nor to condemn it. Instead, like a *Times* leader of the period in which that paper was submitted to the ill influence of such views, a 'realist' attitude is adopted.

The following form of argument has in fact appeared: 'We do not quite like the Soviet way of dealing with an anti-social writer; it is of course, not quite our way of doing things'. To this is added: 'All the same, this fellow Zoshchenko does seem to be a vulgar author of questionable taste—we do understand the disapproval he has brought on himself'.

This is the sort of attitude which appeals to the 'realist'. He accepts the Soviet allegations, and the charge based on these; he shrugs his shoulders over the court sentence, turns his eyes aloof from the accused, priggishly asserts that we 'of course' would do it differently, and hurries away to secure a good lunch before all the tit-bits are gone.

This approach seems to be catered for by Soviet spokesmen, who are latterly learning how to provide soporifics for would-be 'realist' Englishmen. In a letter to *Tribune*, Dr. John Lewis, Editor of the *Modern Quarterly*, had suggested that opinion on one of the one hundred and twenty-three stories which appeared in Zoshchenko's unfinished novel, *Before Sunrise* and was selected by Soviet official criticism to typify Zoshchenko's bad qualities, is 'a matter of taste'.

That was indeed a subtle form of feint—the more subtle (one cannot rub in this point too much)—since so few people in this country can possibly have read the story in question. But, since obviously these stories may eventually be put on the table in an English version accessible to everybody, the Russian writer Simonov, who is now a high State functionary, has put about the report that nobody could possibly tell the full vulgarity of Zoshchenko from a mere translation . . .

Now, Tom Driberg, in *Reynolds News*, has given prominence to that piece of trickery, the sheer fatuousness of which can only be clear to anybody who is acquainted with the incredible simplicity and everyday directness of Zoshchenko's style. Those who do not know Russian, however, and are still inclined to take an official Soviet pronouncement as at least substantially truthful, can, of course, imagine that there are in Zoshchenko all manner of innuendoes, dirty puns and other so-called 'untranslatable' and 'juicy' items. Simonov's plausible story is a striking example of that sort of mud which sticks easily—once one adopts the practice of not verifying the facts—just as the whole tenor of recent Soviet literary criticism is exemplary of that great principle elucidated in classic form in *Mein Kampf*—that a lie takes best when grossly exaggerated.

To get a little more clarity into the Zoshchenko case, it may be useful to outline some main events. These seem to be:—

1. July, 1943, the Moscow magazine *Oktjabr* (*October*) printed an instalment of a new novel by Zoshchenko, entitled *Before Sunrise*. The instalment contained sixty-two typical Zoshchenko thumb-nail stories.

2. A section of the ruling party saw in this novel (cf. point 5 below), if not an attack on Soviet principles, at least a prompting of Soviet citizens to independent thought (' dangerous thoughts ').

3. The succeeding number of *Oktjabr* published a second instalment (August–September) of Zoshchenko's novel. No official adverse criticism had as yet appeared. The second instalment also contained many typical Zoshchenko stories, bringing the total up to one hundred and twenty-three.

4. Succeeding issues of *Oktjabr* neither contained the conclusion of the novel, nor any notice that it had been discontinued, let alone why. Nevertheless—

5. It was not till January, 1944, that the Party magazine, *Bolshevik*, published the first denunciation of Zoshchenko and of his novel. But this dealt with only *the first instalment* of the novel, making it clear that the indictment was drawn up before any more of the novel (i.e., the second instalment, or the manuscript at the editor's office), had been read ; (this is the indictment published in this country in *Modern Quarterly*).

6. This denunciation of instalment one of *Before Sunrise* evidently still failed to carry complete conviction in the Party circles concerned. It remained for some time an isolated attack on Zoshchenko. However virulent (we shall come to that aspect shortly), it failed to secure the complete suppression of the independent novelist. The particular novel was indeed suppressed—but Zoshchenko's stories remained free.

7. Evidently the two currents of thought concerning Zoshchenko continued to exist side by side. On June 22nd, 1946, the Party press editors signed the decision to print a 100,000 edition of Zoshchenko's latest stories—obviously now at a time when the final cataclysm of attack was in full preparation. This late approval of Zoshchenko's stories (tomorrow to be condemned), may be seen as due to the natural inertia of a body in motion. The Kremlin currents which still contained something of the broadness of thought of early Marxism were still not completely submerged. (It seems of prime importance not to forget that early Marxist thought could be both supple and broad). No doubt the war had helped to keep them alive. By making a total call on the nation's patriotism essential, the German onslaught had for a time immobilized the younger generation of party go-getters (*ôte-toi que je m'y mette*)—bosses of the machine rather than promoters of the initial idea.

8. But the war did at last end in victory. This released, not a greater degree of democracy, as some naïve western ' realists ' had imagined it would. On the contrary, the Stalin school could now be brushed aside, the second generation of pilots of the Soviet State dropped. The accomplishment of victory made it possible for the new generation of party bosses to establish a still more rigid dictatorship—they *had* to do so ; in the struggle to maintain the positions they had unscrupulously acquired, in an environment lacking in absolute standards of conduct, each successive wave of rulers must be more apprehensive of being ejected by those they have supplanted, or still younger competitors for power, and therefore more ruthless in rule.

This political world scarcely concerns us here. What matters is that now, at last, the full spate of purge pronouncements broke over the Soviet Union. There is surely no need now to reproduce the Soviet documents once again. The *Modern Quarterly* has reproduced the basic attack—that on *Before Sunrise*, and it is this attack that illuminates the whole scene. The version of the *Bolshevik* article in *Modern Quarterly* is a garbled version. Extracts have been taken apparently at random from here and there in the original, and stuck together into new paragraphs, and the whole labelled ' excerpt '. But, as the attack consisted of uniform vilification, repeated from

beginning to end, this does not very much matter. It is the attack itself which calls for attention. Everything else hangs on it.

Now, before we go any further, let us be precise—there are two quite distinct aspects of all this—first, the attack as it may concern any Soviet citizen—second, the attack as it concerns ourselves. It is the second aspect that concerns us, although there is one fundamental feature of the attack which involves both aspects—namely, the *substance* of the charges made. This should be understood everywhere. In Soviet jurisprudence, a court works to establish ' the material truth '. Therefore, not only in common law, but also in Soviet law, though the internal Soviet treatment of the material truth may not be our affair, it is our duty to be sure about substance.

But the *Bolshevik* did not say that Zoschchenko's novel was ' in bad taste '. It asserted that it was a sea of filth and vulgarity. Further, in the course of the article, coming back in good demagogic style, to throw out assertions which repeated previous assertions, it declared that a certain one of the stories in Zoshchenko's novel was so indecent that the details could not be printed in a Soviet magazine.

This particular assertion the *Modern Quarterly* ' excerpt ' singled out, detaching the portion of a sentence containing it from its context and putting it next to the basic allegation of the whole work being a ' sea of vulgarity and filth '.

Now, however fantastic, such a statement in itself is again a relative statement, and as such not to be either affirmed or denied. That one section of the Soviet press originally would have denied it (if allowed freedom of expression) is shown by the Editors of *Oktjabr* actually publishing the story which was so indecent it could not be printed. Nevertheless, so far, the assertion is a relative one.

But the *Bolshevik* proceeds (and *Modern Quarterly* reproduces) to give reasons for this opinion on taste. It proceeds, in short, to make *absolute* assertions not of taste, but of alleged fact of substance—the foundation for its opinion. It is the rightness of these absolute assertions that so many in this country have accepted without any proof whatsoever, in good faith. Yet they are simply *absolute* lies.

Now, I repeat, I do not propose to enter here into the matter as from the angle of a Soviet citizen. I am solely concerned with our own reactions, and the way these may bear on any conclusions any of us draw from Soviet literary practice and Soviet application of the ideal of freedom of speech and expression.

Reading the assertion ' " *An Old Man Dies* " describes the lechery of a dying man ', and taking a Soviet document emanating from so lofty a level as trustworthy (as Dr. John Lewis in the *Modern Quarterly* clearly did), one cannot but conclude that the *Bolshevik* is probably right in finding *Before Sunrise* is ' a sea of vulgarity and filth '. No doubt, thinks the unwitting English reader, the whole of this novel is interlarded with pornography.

The truth is that there is no pornography whatsoever in the book. To exemplify this assertion, let us take the ' unprintable ' story of a dying man's lechery. Here it is in full. The substance of this story, I related to a meeting of the writers' group of the Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union, gathered to hear and discuss the official Soviet version of their most recent literary events. A fragment was subsequently printed by the *Tribune*. But only good can come of printing the whole of this remarkable story.[2] It points like a bright red arrow at the very core of the question.

AN OLD MAN DIES

MIKHAIL ZOSHCHENKO

I am standing in a peasant hut. On a table lies an old man, dying.

He has been there over two days, between life and death.

To-day there is a wax taper in his hand. It drops and goes out, but they light it again.

His family are at his head. They keep their eyes fixed on the old man. Around is unbelievable poverty, dirt, rags, misery. . . .

The old man's feet are towards the window. His face is dark, strained. His breathing is uneven. There are moments when he seems to have passed away.

I stoop down to the old woman—his wife—and say: ' I'll go for a doctor. It's no go, having him lie there on the table three whole days '.

The old woman shakes her head. ' We must not disturb him ', she says.

The old man opens his eyes and passes a dull glance over all those about him. His lips mutter something.

One of the women, young and sun-burned, bends down to the old man and in silence listens to his muttering.

What does he say ? ' the old woman asks.

' He wants the breast ', the woman answers. And, swiftly unbuttoning her blouse, she takes the old man's hand and lays it to her bared breast.

I see the old man's face lighten. Something like a smile flutters on his lips. He breathes more easily, peaceably.

All stand silent, nobody stirring.

Suddenly a shudder passes through the old man's body. His hand falls away helplessly. His features become stern and completely at rest. He ceases to breathe. He has died.

Immediately, the old woman begins to keen. Following her, they all keen.

I leave the hut.

First, we note that there is no lechery. The poor old man, though not yet dead, has also ceased to be of this world. He has been practically dead for over fifty hours. In a final regression, an infantile desire comes to him—or so a young peasant woman interprets him as muttering. For Zoshchenko puts an additional question-mark. His first question—the question running through his whole book—

[2] Simonov, as reported by Tom Driberg in *Reynolds News*, has spread the would-be plausible comment that the vulgarity of Zoshchenko cannot be conveyed in translation. It may be left to those who like easy debating cues to ask how it can be that qualities which make a work a ' sea of filth and vulgarity ' can elude the translator's skill. (See facsimile opposite of original).

Поцеловав мою руку и ничего не сказав, старуха уходит.

Тогда я подхожу к крестьянину. Он пожилой. В лаптях. В рваной дерюге. Я спрашиваю его, почему он содрал с себя шапку за десять шагов и поклонился мне в пояс.

Поклонившись еще раз, крестьянин пытается поцеловать мою руку. Я отдергиваю ее.

— Чем я тебя рассердил, барин? — спрашивает он.

И вдруг в этих словах и в этом его поклоне я увидел и услышал все. Я увидел тень прошлой привычки жизни. Я услышал окрик помещика и тихий рабский ответ. Я увидел жизнь, о которой я не имел понятия. Я был поражен, как никогда в жизни.

— Отец,— сказал я крестьянину,— вот уже год власть у рабочих и крестьян. А ты собираешься лизать мне руку

— До нас не дошло,— говорит крестьянин.— Верно, господа съехали со своих дворов, живут по хатам... Но кто ж его знает, как оно будет...

Я иду с крестьянином до его деревни. Я захожу в его избу.

На каждом шагу я вижу чугунную тень прошлого.

## Умирает старик

Я стою в крестьянской избе. На столе лежит умирающий старик.

Он лежит уже третий день и не умирает.

Сегодня у него в руке восковая свечка. Она падает и гаснет, но ее снова зажигают.

У изголовья родственники. Они смотрят на старика не отрываясь. Вокруг невероятная бедность, грязь, тряпки, нищета...

Старик лежит ногами к окну. Лицо у него темное, напряженное. Дыхание неровное. Иной раз кажется, что он уже умер.

Наклонившись к старухе — его жене, я тихо говорю ей:

— Я съезжу за доктором. Не дело, что он третий день лежит на столе.

Старуха отрицательно качает головой.

— Не надо его тревожить,— говорит она.

Старик открывает глаза и мутным взором обводит окружающих. Губы его что-то шепчут.

Одна из женщин, молодая и смуглолицая наклоняется к старику и молча слушает его бормотанье.

— Что он? — спрашивает старуха.

— Титьку просит,— отвечает женщина. И, быстро расстегнув свою кофту, берет руку старика и кладет ее на свою обнаженную грудь.

Я вижу, как лицо старика светлеет. Нечто вроде улыбки пробегает по его губам. Он дышит ровней, спокойней.

Все стоят молча, не шевелясь.

Вдруг тело старика вздрагивает. Рука его беспомощно падает вниз. Лицо делается строгим и совсем спокойным. Он перестает дышать. Он умер.

Тотчас старуха начинает голосить. И вслед за ней голосят все.

Я выхожу из избы.

## Мы играем в карты

На столе керосиновая лампа под кокетливым розовым абажуром. Мы играем в преферанс.

Мои партнеры — толстая дама Ольга Павловна, старик с гнилыми зубами и его дочь — молодая красивая женщина, Вероника.

Это бывшие помещики из соседних районов. Они не пожелали уехать далеко от своих владений. Сняв у крестьян эту избу, они живут здесь на правах частных людей.

Вот уже четыре часа мы сидим за столом. Мне осточертела эта игра. Я бы с наслаждением ее бросил. Но мне неудобно — я в проигрыше у меня большой реми́з наверху.

Мне безумно не везет. Везет Ольге Павловне, которая с каждой удачей делается все более шумной и радостной.

Открыв «10 игры», она от восторга ударяет ладонью по столу

— Я счастливая! — кричит она.— Мне всегда и во всем везло... Пройдет два-три месяца, и я, уверена, что получу обратно свое имение..

Старик с гнилыми зубами начинает смеяться.

— Одно дело карты, почтеннейшая Ольга Павловна,— говорит он,— а другое дело — Россия, политика, революция.

— Безразлично!— кричит Ольга Павловна.— В жизни мы тоже играем в карты. Одному везет, другому не везет. А мне всегда и во всем везло — и в жизни, и в карты... Вот увидите, я скоро получу обратно свое «Затишье»...

Сдавая карты, она говорит:

— Получу свое «Затишье», немного поморю своих мужиков, и все пойдет по-старому.

— После такой революции только лишь попорете?— спрашивает гнилозубый старик, перестав смеяться.

Ольга Павловна, прекратив сдачу, говорит:

— Я не такая безмозглая, чтоб сажать в тюрьму своих мужиков. Я не намерена остаться без рабочей силы. Имейте это в виду...

is : to what extent is human happiness, individually, a physiological thing ? To this, in masterly fashion, he adds the additional *indicated* rather than explicit, question : did the old man *consciously* ask for the breast, or did the woman, with female instinct, divine what might solace his last moments, and on her own initiative, *conscious or unconscious*, make it easier for him finally to slip out of this life ?

This second question is not a mere matter of detail. It raises the whole issue to a much higher and more acute level of awareness. There is not merely the question : ' is it not true that no socialism can ever remove certain moods of unhappiness ? ' ; there is also the question : ' is not awareness of this fundamental truth a profound part of our innate, instinctive knowledge ? or, at least, that of *women ?* '

Here it is inevitable to glance briefly at the purely internal, Soviet aspect, of the case. We have Zoshchenko's heinous crime : he has dared to use his great virtuosity (and the tremendous popularity gained by it), to ask very deep-probing heretical questions. Not only questions about individual happiness—but discussion of the possibility of finding the truth about the origins of individual unhappiness, by a process of self-analysis. He openly discussed and compared the analytical methods of Pavlov and Freud—by doing so he flung wide open a door which the less intelligent and more mediocre party-bosses and go-getters thought safely closed for all time.

Here it is useful to refer to Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution—that granting freedom of speech and expression. We note that these are granted ' in the interest of the working people '. This is to-day not to be understood to mean that it is in the interests of humanity to have freedom of thought and expression, for that is how civilization is developed. It is to be understood in the narrower sense : that which the Communist Party dictatorship has decided is in the interests of humanity.

Being themselves the sole-self-authorised purveyors of human happiness, to be attained through collective forms of life, the go-getters who are now coming to the fore in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union could not tolerate a man who in his work showed—what every normal man and woman in the U.S.S.R. must instinctively know—that though collectivist measures may be efficacious for the maximum liquidation of that unhappiness which is due to inadequate and irrational utilization to man's benefit of natural resources, the social forms which these doctrines evolve can nevertheless never even pretend to make men *individually* happy.

To return to the matter as it directly affects ourselves : without entering into the question of Soviet morality, we do need to take this whole business of the suppression of Zoshchenko (and others) and look at it as it really is. For it is not a mere isolated ' literary ' phenomenon. To present it as such is a further deliberate or

inadvertent falsification of truth. To do this by slanderous statements, which cannot but be deliberate, raises the basic immorality to a very high degree indeed. We find falsifications of the same kind in the U.S.S.R. in the world of science—notably in the falsification of scientific theory and knowledge by such charlatans as Lysenko

Here again, without being directly concerned with what takes place within the U.S.S.R., it is pertinent in passing to note that, though we are not immediately affected, we may be more directly, physically affected some day, when the application of charlatan biology, on so vast a scale, in the organization of the agriculture and horticulture of many *hundred millions* of people,[3] instead of providing food for millions, brings them starvation, and upsets thereby the whole balance of food distribution on an undreamt-of scale. But though there is that alarming aspect, reminiscent of the root cause of early migrations from Asia, which does concern us, let us confine ourselves here to the world of ideas.

Let us, namely, forget for the moment the peculiar internal implications of Article 125 of the Soviet Constitution, and concentrate on the Soviet ruling method of obtaining political aims by systematised and forced propagation of down-right lies, as basis for mass slander and vilification.

For it is one thing for the State to exercise over a writer the power of mental and physical starvation into obedience. That is simple, crude tyranny, which may well be a passing phenomenon. But it is quite another thing to allow gross falsification to enter the world of ideas as a recognized, permitted, unchallenged method of argument. Not merely, then, is it a Zoshchenko that is wiped out. A fundamental principle of law, embodied in this country in the rules of evidence, and in the Soviet Union in the concept of ' the material truth ',—principles it has needed many, many centuries to establish—may go by the board.

It is easy to understand why the thing goes so far. Wiping out the man Zoshchenko, or the writer Zoshchenko, is an easy matter. But the very popular things he has written are not so easy to dispose of. Knowing that many people must have read the ' dangerous-thoughts ' novel—knowing that the germs of free thought released by Zoshchenko are everywhere in the air—they too must be wiped out. This is to be achieved by deliberate distortion of reality. The novel must be made to seem something which it never was.

Nor is it enough to achieve this lie in the Soviet Union itself. The dictatorship demands more. Through the *Modern Quarterly*, no doubt an innocent agent, the lie and the slander have already been given great currency in this country. Through the medium of well-intentioned but ill-informed liberal-minded men, the false currency

[3] It should be noted that the solid human block of the U.S.S.R. and related or contiguous peoples under direct U.S.S.R. control *does now amount* to upwards of 500 million persons.

has now received a substantial and insidious measure of general intellectual support. But possibly it is still not too late to put the facts, cleverly concealed and misrepresented by Soviet agents, on the table. Possibly too, before these barbaric, obscurantist methods of misrepresentation go too far among us, we may, in the world of thought, as recently in the world of international force, raise a notice-board with the simple device: 'Halt—major road ahead!'

## THE BEREAVED MOTHER

I wake in the early morning: the day
Stretches like the Atlantic before me;
But there is no end, and no object in my journey,
Only the unisled, featureless sea.

The waves of time that broke so certainly
On the hours of his insistent infant needs,
Assume a nightmare weight and aimlessly
Batter my idle hands and empty eyes.

The others hurry with averted looks
Unable to bear my grief's barbarity,
But I must endure their stabbing pity,
The excitement they find in vicarious tragedy.

Shut them all out, and in the unvexed house
Meet the vast memories his small absence breathes
At the turn of the stair where the window looks on the garden—
There I would watch his brightness through the leaves.

This death has turned the future and bricked up
My pride in his huge achievements of walking and speaking;
It has denied the past, the joy I knew
In his begetting and in all love-making.

I am a bird blown on the careless wind,
My soul has shrivelled out into the dark,
Into the eternal emptiness of time
Wrapped in infinite negations of the heart.

ROSEMARY ROBERTS.

# THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

*An Aspect of Henry James*

S. GORLEY PUTT

That was the way many things struck me at that time, in England—as reproductions of something that existed primarily in art or literature. It was not the picture, the poem, the fictive page, that seemed to me a copy; these things were the originals, and the life of happy and distinguished people was fashioned in their image'.—(*The Author of Beltraffio*).

I

The Continent of Europe—including the British Isles—offers, to-day, no very attractive shrine for an American. I do not refer only to the post-war Europe of ruin and desolation, but also to the pre-war Europe with its strident little nationalities and its goose-stepping children. In order to gain some hint of the attractions of Europe to an American of sensibility between the middle and the end of the last century, it would probably help readers of my own generation to recall at least the notion of 'Europe' in the nineteen-twenties: the Europe in which Munich was a fine old German city, the London summer still called itself a Season, and the name France called up a picture not of warring sects and crumbling defences but rather of villages dusty in the sunlight, of Proust's Balbec, panama-hats and brioches.

There will be occasion later to deplore the fact that Henry James allowed his interest in the predicament of Americans in Europe (and, to a lesser extent, of Europeans in America) to distort the genius he had already shown—in *The Bostonians*, in *Roderick Hudson*, in *The Princess Casamassima*—for a loving preoccupation with the general human predicament. 'National' characteristics loom as large in many of his early novels and tales as 'social' characteristics loomed large in the work of his later years, and unfriendly readers who happen by chance upon these stories rather than upon those in which his concentration on 'personal' characteristics is least disguised, may be forgiven if they find him tediously prone to national caricatures animated against a travelogue, or social caricatures animated (barely!) against a series of trivial complacent salons. It would, however, be a simple matter to show how the interest in society grew out of the interest in the conscious behaviour of individuals *in* society—and Proust could be adduced as a witness in sympathy, for we should not deny to the one novelist a latitude of reference we are inclined to concede the other. Similarly, it can, I believe, be demonstrated that Henry James' unfortunate preoccupation with the inter-relations of the representatives of different countries is only an unwise attempt to 'externalize' or 'universalize' his own deep personal concern

with his own reactions as an American plunging willingly into the European scene.

The notion of Henry James as a being enslaved from earliest childhood by a praeternatural nostalgia for Europe is too well established to need much stress (people who have not ventured, in their reading of James, beyond *The Turn of The Screw* and *The Aspern Papers*, seem qualified without exception to endorse this account), and in many important ways it is too accurate a notion to require much modification. His letters and autobiographical volumes are chock-full of references to ' that sense of " Europe " to which I felt that my very earliest consciousness waked '.[1] His parents spent the summer of 1844 in Europe and took with them their baby sons William and Henry: Henry had been born in April, 1843, but claims that his memories of Paris date from this pilgrimage undertaken at the ripe age of one year and some few months. ' I had been hurried off to London and to Paris immediately after my birth, and then and there, I was ever afterwards strongly to feel, that poison had entered my veins.'[2] When he was twelve, he ' returned ' to Europe with his family on a leisurely three-year trip which took him to Geneva, London, Paris, Boulogne; looking back on that wonderful experience nearly sixty years later, he could still conjure up indulgent memories of the rich inrush of impressions—as, to pick a random example,[3] of ' the incomparable passage, as we judged it, of the Prince Imperial borne forth for his airing or his progress to Saint Cloud in the splendid coach . . . beside which the *cent-gardes*, all light-blue and silver and intensely quick jolt, rattled with pistols raised and cocked '

The point of these and successive impressions, however, is not so much that they were impressions of Europe as that they were impressions of unusual quality and clarity. If it is important to recognize in the young James an almost quivering sensibility to European culture, it is still more important to recognize a similar sensitivity to everything else he saw, smelt, touched, tasted, or merely conjectured. When he attempted, late in life, to shake out ' the whole content of memory and affection in each enacted and recovered moment ', he had to admit that from the first dawning of consciousness ' aspects began to multiply and images to swarm '.[4] ' I saw my parents homesick ', he wrote, ' for the ancient order '—but musing on those years he can recall not only the longing for Europe, but also the minutest tinge and flavour of that old New York in which the longings came to him. He can give us glimpses of the city, scenes alive with accidental figures like those straw-hatted or long-skirted fauna who so oddly populate old picture-postcards, and scenes not

[1] *A Small Boy and Others*, Chapter III.
[2] Preface to Volume XIII of the New York Edition; see also *A Small Boy and Others*, Chapter V.
[3] *A Small Boy and Others*, Chapter XXIV.
[4] *Op. cit.*, Chapter I.

only of a romantic vanished mid-nineteenth-century security, but also of dentists' waiting-rooms and of ice-cream parlours, of ' rank and rubbishy waterside quarters ', of districts where ' the squalor was a squalor wonderfully mixed and seasoned, and . . . I should wrong the whole impression if I didn't figure it first and foremost as that of some vast succulent cornucopia '.[5]

This, then, is the primary motive for James' own ' passionate pilgrimage '—a restless need ever to increase the scope of his awareness, the perimeter of his vast bland sensitivity to impressions. A secondary motive, easier to distinguish and fatally easy to misrepresent, is the narrower but cognate desire to turn away from the relatively meagre diet set before his complex sensibility by the American cultural scene in the 1860's and 1870's, and to seek out the richer nourishment of the European civilization he had but glimpsed for himself, but which was the daily preoccupation of his parents and which he was tasting in anticipation as he devoured European writing. This dissatisfaction with the American mental menu was acknowledged time and again throughout his life, and never more acutely than when—as so often—it was accompanied by a feeling of guilt at his apparent ingratitude of response to the country of his birth and the people who were, after all, his comrades and compatriots.

In the first pages of his study of Nathaniel Hawthorne,[6] Henry James announced his view that ' the flower of art blooms only where the soil is deep, that it takes a great deal of history to produce a little literature, that it needs a complex social machinery to set a writer in motion '. He goes on to make it thoroughly explicit that in his view America provided no such soil, no such machinery. As he saw it, Americans devoted to the world of business the energies which Europeans were still devoting to the world of ideas and perceptions. ' Before the American business-man ', he confesses,[7] ' I was absolutely and irredeemably helpless, with no fibre of my intelligence responding to his mystery '. Henry James, Senior, himself the scion of ' a prosperous man of business, whose successful career left him in a position to bequeath to his numerous descendants a fortune large enough to enable them all to live in complete independence of the commercial world ', [8] encouraged his family to cultivate a studious aloofness from the clamorous demands of an age given over to bargaining and salesmanship ; his son, writing after a lifetime of aversion from the mercantile, almost shudders with distaste as he pays the filial tribute : ' business in a world of business was the thing we most agreed (differ as we might on minor issues) in knowing nothing about '.[9] Perhaps this horror had something to do with his confession that ' I so feared and abhorred mathematics that the simplest arithmetical operation had always found and kept me helpless

[5] *Op. cit.*, Chapter VI.
[6] Published in the English Men of Letters series, 1879.
[7] Preface to Volume XIII of the New York Edition.
[8] Percy Lubbock, Introduction to Volume I of the *Letters*.
[9] *A Small Boy and Others*, Chapter V.

and blank '.[10] It certainly added vigour to his devastating comments on British commercialism when he discovered that the inhabitants of the Fortunate Isles had tended their immemorial lawns with avarice as well as with devotion, and that some owners of mellow libraries and time-hallowed masterpieces of painting looked upon their inheritance exclusively in terms of market value. But these disillusionments in particular instances in no way contradicted his own early longing for the old dispensation—indeed, they demonstrate, on the contrary, that the zeal of his pilgrimage never died.

He shared fully in the general family restlessness; between the years 1858 (when he returned to America at the end of the three-year tour), at the age of fifteen and 1876 (when he made his first serious attempt to settle in London, at the age of thirty-three), we can trace his passages to and fro across the Atlantic, follow him to Geneva, Harvard, Liverpool and the English country towns, Venice, Florence, Rome, America again, back to Switzerland, Paris, Homburg, Rome and Florence again, back to Cambridge (Massachussetts), Paris in the autumn of 1875, and so back to London where, writing steadily and leaping now and then to the Continent for some fresh or renewed impressions, he maintained his headquarters until late in 1881 when he returned to America. In the spring of 1882 he returned to London, and did not visit America again for more than twenty years.[11]

Add to the early passionate conscious greed for impressions ('such, in small very plastic minds, is the intensity, if not the value, of early impressions'[12]) a disposition, epitomized in the quotation from *The Author of Beltraffio* at the head of this essay, to view the world of nature *through* the world of art, and the complementary impulses behind Henry James' own pilgrimage are revealed. It is difficult, and indeed almost sacrilegious, to tear 'examples' from his writings, for the whole canon is bathed from first to last in the light of this conscious view of life. There are, however, in some of the earlier tales, passages which reflect this light at its purest, undimmed by social criticism or the carefully arranged filters of his later preoccupation with formal construction. Nowhere is the Promised Land more serenely and happily viewed than in the eager innocent tributes to England embodied in *The Passionate Pilgrim* itself (written in 1870, printed the following year, and issued in book form with other stories in 1875).

The narrator meets Clement Searle in the grounds of Hampton Court, and

> 'I foresaw that I should find him quite to the manner born—to ours; full of glimpses and responses, of deserts and desolations. His perceptions would be fine and his opinions pathetic. . . . On my telling him that I was a fellow citizen he stopped short, deeply touched. . . .'

[10] *Notes of a Son and Brother*, Chapter I.

[11] For the biographical data I have relied on Percy Lubbock's admirable commentary to his edition of the *Letters*.

[12] *A Small Boy and Others*, Chapter XVIII.

Over a ' bottle of tolerable Burgundy '—and how this adjective betrays, from the pen of a twenty-seven year-old American, the urge to confront the privileged life on knowing terms !—the allied pilgrims drink in the scene, ' the England of one's early reveries ' :

> ' Over against us, amid the ripeness of its gardens, the dark red residence, with its formal facings and its open windows, seemed to make the past definite and massive ; and the little village, nestling between park and palace, around a patch of turfy common, with its taverns of figurative names, its ivy-towered church, its mossy roofs, looked like the property of a feudal lord. It was in this dark composite light that I had read the British classics ; it was this mild moist air that had been blown from the pages of the poets ; while I seemed to feel the buried generations in the dense and elastic sod '.

And when, later, the two friends venture into the English countryside, the careful balanced narrative glows with a warmth which could never be traced solely to the habit of reading English novelists and looking at English lithographs ; there is a happy assurance about it all which is in significant contrast to the somewhat melodramatic motivation of these observers as ' characters '.

> ' Going further yet we entered the russet town—where surely Miss Austen's heroines, in chariots and curricles, must often have come a-shopping for their sandals and mittens ; we lounged in the grassed and gravelled precinct and gazed insatiably at that most soul-soothing sight, the waning wasting afternoon light, the visible ether that feels the voices of the chimes cling far aloft to the quiet sides of the cathedral-tower ; saw it linger and nestle and abide, as it loves to do on all perpendicular spaces, converting them irresistibly into registers and dials ; tasted, too, as deeply, of the peculiar stillness of this place of priests ; saw a rosy English lad come forth and lock the door of the old foundation-school that dove-tailed with cloister and choir, and carry his big responsible key into one of the quiet canonical houses : and then stood musing together on the effect on one's mind of having in one's boyhood gone and come through cathedral-shades as a King's scholar, and yet kept ruddy with much cricket in misty river meadows '

The ' story ' of this early essay is of small consequence ; the character of the English Miss Searle, the lady of Lackley Park, is merely the most precious item in the narrator's collection of curiosities :

> ' Of all the old things I had seen in England this exhibited mind of Miss Searle seemed to me the oldest, the most handed-down and taken for granted ; fenced and protected as it was by convention and precedent and usage, thoroughly acquainted with its subordinate place. I felt as if I were talking with the heroine of a last-century novel '

Even the considerable dash of bitterness in the sketch of this good lady's brother is less an attempt at a character study than the personification of the pilgrim's consciousness, in the midst of so much garnered beauty, of his excluded state :

> ' Our host . . . led the conversation to the country we had left ; rather as if a leash had been attached to the collar of some lumpish and half-domesticated animal the tendency of whose movements had to be recognized. He spoke of it indeed as of some fabled planet, alien to the British orbit, lately proclaimed to have the admixture of atmospheric gases

> required to support animal life, but not, save under cover of a liberal afterthought, to be admitted into one's regular conception of things. I, for my part, felt nothing but regret that the spheric smoothness of his universe should be disfigured by the extrusion even of such inconsiderable particles as ourselves '.

And social criticism, when it does appear, comes only as a pious version of this same disinherited objectivity :

> ' *Noblesse oblige*—Oxford must damnably do so. What a horrible thing not to rise to such examples ! If you pay the pious debt to the last farthing of interest you may go through life with her blessing ; but if you let it stand unhonoured you're a worse barbarian than we ! '

There is, finally, a passage describing the Lackley peacock which brings together in small compass three aspects of the early James : his feeling for ' the genius of stately places ', his attempt to use his characters mainly as the exponents of a point of view, and his tendency (as though to compensate for the passivity of the first two aspects) to rely on stiff old-fashioned staginess to agitate his figures and animate his scene. The dropping of this third quality and the development of the other two—especially the second—make up, in short, the story of his artistic pilgrimage. Here, with the three ingredients still awkwardly mixed, is the passage :

> ' The scene had a beautiful old-time air : the peacock flaunting in the foreground like the genius of stately places ; the broad terrace, which flattered an innate taste of mine for all deserted walks where people may have sat after heavy dinners to drink coffee in old Sèvres and where the stiff brocade of women's dresses may have rustled over grass or gravel. . . " The peacock has done for you, Mr. Searle ", said his cousin, " what he does only for very great people. A year ago there came here a very great person—a grand old lady—to see my brother. I don't think that since then he has spread his tail as wide for any one else—not by a dozen feathers " '

If we set *The Passionate Pilgrim* alongside *Flickerbridge*, a short story printed in 1902, we shall see that James' characterization has improved out of all knowledge during the thirty years' interval, that a tendency to melodrama has changed to a rooted habit of understatement, but that the glow of love for traditional England has not been extinguished by his experience of the dimmer side of English social life. Indeed, *Flickerbridge* presents the old enchantment at its tenderest and subtlest, with just enough ' plot ', mainly in the interplay of quiet characters, to sustain the mood. Frank Granger, who is engaged to be married to a competent young American publicist, comes to England and visits Elickerbridge, the ancestral home of his fiancée's distant cousin. He falls in love with the place and his respect for the peace of mind of its timid chatelaine, Miss Wenham, becomes so strong that he breaks off his engagement rather than run the risk of introducing his young lady to the place—her bright zeal would, he feels certain, spoil everything by making both the place and the owner self-conscious. It is, frankly, an incredible theme, and only a Henry James hero would behave with such wry sensitive self-effacement. But the ' theme ' is less notable than the mellowing of the author's regard for the England of his youthful dreams : he

sticks to his view, but he is no longer unaware of the finer implications of a society maintaining a losing fight for the preservation of its heritage:

> 'The scene was as rare as some fine old print with the best bits down in the corners. Old books and old pictures, allusions remembered and aspects conjectured, reappeared to him; he knew now what anxious islanders had been trying for in their backward hunt for the homely'.

Nor is he unaware, now, of the danger of brushing the bloom by too sudden a snatch:

> 'Supreme beauty suddenly revealed is apt to strike us as a possible illusion playing with our desire—instant freedom with it to strike us as a possible rashness'.

The full measure of James' advance in his pilgrimage, however, is to be observed—along with the superb mastery of his prose, indicating a far milestone on that other pilgrimage to the perfection of his chosen medium—in the more assured manner in which *people* are examined as worthy or unworthy exponents of the culture on which they are nourished. Miss Searle, of Lackley Park was merely 'the heroine of a last-century novel'; Miss Wenham of Flickerbridge is not only the living spirit of the rich reticences of her setting, she is also worthy to take her place in the author's gallery of English female gentility in its unmarried semi-eccentric and wholly timorous guise —the Pre-Raphaelite Miss Ambient of *The Author of Beltraffio*, Lady Aurora Langrish in *The Princess Casamassima*, and a host of other sympathetic spinsters. The point is, I think, that just as James has 'seen through' his early romantic version of England and can still treasure, with the wiser valuation of experience, the real worth behind his dream, so in treating his living exponents he can now observe them with a detachment offering much scope for straight satire, and still reserve the right to lay aside the rapier and extend instead an understanding, a forgiving hand of friendship. He is now wise where once he was merely clever, compassionate in his disillusion where once he was trying to be 'knowing'. There is a lifetime of real appreciation between the 'tolerable Burgundy' of *The Passionate Pilgrim* and the 'wafted gratitude' sanctifying the grotesque figure of Miss Wenham:

> 'Miss Wenham, fifty-five years of age and unappeasably timid, unaccountably strange, had, on her reduced scale, an almost Gothic grotesqueness; but the final effect of one's sense of it was an amenity that accompanied one's steps like wafted gratitude. More flurried, more spasmodic, more aplogetic, more completely at a loss at one moment and more precipitately abounding at another, he had never before in all his days seen any maiden lady. . . .
>
> 'She wore on the top of her head an upright circular cap that made her resemble a caryatid disburdened, and on other parts of her person strange combinations of colours, stuffs, shapes, of metal, mineral and plant . . . she approached objects, subjects, the simplest questions and answers and the whole material of intercourse, either with the indirectness of terror or with the violence of despair. These things, none the less, the refinements of oddity and intensities of custom, her betrayal at once of conventions and simplicities, of ease and of agony, her roundabout retarded suggestions and perceptions, still permitted her to strike her guest as irresistibly charming'

II

Thus far we have considered only the English pilgrimage. But before casting on England as his spiritual home, Henry James experienced the enchantment of France and the intoxication of Italy. One or two of the other tales printed along with *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1875 show attractive evidence of the impact of Europe, an impact acknowledged with reasonable directness and not tricked out in terms of debate by the manipulation of 'international' characters. *Madame de Mauves* (published in a magazine in 1874) has its sour comments and its too-clever thumb-nail sketches of social snobbery (e.g., 'Madame Clairin . . . had made a remunerative match and sacrificed her name to the millions of a prosperous and aspiring wholesale druggist—a gentleman liberal enough to regard his fortune as a moderate price for being towed into circles unpervaded by pharmaceutic odours'), and once again the plot is an uneasy balance between the over-sensitive withdrawal of the American 'narrator', Longmore, and the highly 'Continental' cruelties and sufferings of the de Mauves family; but when the rhetoric and the staginess have been forgotten, the impression of an idealized French culture still remains in the reader's mind. Longmore might well have shared the unfortunate heroine's early romantic belief that 'the enjoyment of inherited and transmitted consideration, consideration attached to the fact of birth, would be the direct guarantee of an ideal delicacy of feeling'. Even more might he lend himself (and his creator) to the enthusiastic tolerance with which Mme. Clairin viewed the probable social braveries of the female ancestors who gaze down from the walls:

> 'How they did it—go and look at the dusky faded canvases and pastels and ask. "They were dear brave women of wit. When they had a headache they put on a little rouge and came to supper as usual, and when they had a heartache they touched up that quarter with just such another brush. These are great traditions and charming precedents. . . ."'

French scenes and French characters in James' tales of the next few years are (like the maturing paragraphs of his English observation) sketched with a rather more critical pen, but the enchantment is still alive behind that self-conscious cleverness of the semi-satirical 'knowing' view. Describing the little seaport of Blanquais-les-Galets, where the two young gentlemen of *Confidence* (1880) disport themselves, the author seems to be on his guard against a too-easy surrender to charm:

> 'There was evidently a great deal of nature about it, and at this moment, nature, embodied in the clear, gay sunshine, in the blue and quiet sea, in the daisied grass of the high-shouldered downs, had an air of inviting the intelligent observer to postpone his difficulties'.

Moreover, to cite random instances from the same novel, there are passing twinges of that acid quasi-pompous humour of inflated

phrase in which James so often affected to utter an Olympian judgment of the *American* scene : it is as though the author is still determined not to be ' had ', however much the scene may attract him, however closely it may seem to approximate to his boyhood dreams :

> '. . . it was one of those diminutive structures which are known at French watering-places as " chalets ", and, with an exiguity of furniture, are let for the season to families that pride themselves upon their powers of contraction '.
>
> ' A fine day in Paris brings out a wonderfully bright and appreciative multitude of strollers and loungers, and the liberal spaces of the Champs Elysées were on this occasion filled with those placid votaries of inexpensive entertainment who abound in the French capital '.

I have already suggested that James' freshly excited or recalled impressions of American scenes, when placed alongside similar enthusiasms for European sights and sounds and smells, should cause an attentive reader to concentrate on the quality rather than (so to say) the geography of his reactions. To continue the argument a stage further, I would suggest that these passages of mock-inflation should be taken not so much as evidence of a bitterness towards his beloved but exclusively self-sufficient Europe, but rather studied in conjunction with innumerable parallel passages from his descriptions of American life, as giving us some clue to his *general* conscious attitude towards his own *general* immediate impressions. There is certainly a growing stiffness in his attitude towards Europe as the goal of the passionate pilgrim, and it would be idle to deny a certain surface disenchantment even while we seek to recognize the underlying faithfulness of his quest. But the *general* disinclination to place too implicit a trust in his impressions, or sink too much emotional capital in his longing to uncover the human heart-afflicting ' sympathy ' in external surroundings, is to my mind a more rewarding theme. It is, at least, a more legitimate field for literary criticism, for it depends less upon the imagined coincidence of biographical data with narrative opinions than upon the author's attitude towards his own reactions as expressed impartially (and perhaps unconsciously ?) in a trick of prose style occurring at every successive stage of his development as a writer, and in contexts American, European, or geographically unlocated.

Not to be recognized too easily as an excluded foreigner was clearly one aim in the young author's mind ; enthusiasm let loose on some occasions must at other times be kept hidden, and the Burgundy be appraised as ' tolerable '. It is always easier, of course, to be on one's guard against people than against art or nature : ' sales resistance ' is naturally stronger against wares which have disappointed us in the past, than against wares which at worst arouse no more than disapproval or irritation, and at best can give us a passing sense of personal unworthiness. And so (as we shall see when we come to discuss the full International Obsession) in the earliest pilgrimages we can detect mild instances of that savage penetration into European

*moeurs* which would torment the later pilgrim even when the culture produced by such paltry specimens appears still to be rich and worthy of admiration. For American pilgrims of the 1870's, for example, the English peerage was a favoured shrine, but in *The American* (1876) we find Lord Deepmere's physiognomy exhibited as denoting 'great simplicity, a certain amount of brutality, and a probable failure in the past to profit by rare educational advantages'—a sketch closely resembling that of Sir Arthur Demesne in *The Siege of London*. Similarly, when Christopher Newman, the passionate pilgrim in the same novel, meets the French lady who enshrines all his most cherished preconceptions, he 'wondered where, in so exquisite a compound, nature and art showed their dividing line. Where did the special intention separate from the habit of good manners? Where did urbanity end and simplicity begin?'

*The Portrait of a Lady* (1880) offers us a super-cultivated villain, but Isabel Archer, the poor girl who is lured into his chilly trap by her love of European life, does not have to revise her opinion of the setting of an aristocratic society but only of one or two deceitful denizens of the favoured scene. Her creator can still revel in 'a seat of ease, indeed of luxury, telling of arrangements subtly studied and refinements frankly proclaimed', but pause to note how the connoisseur can turn sour, how Gilbert Osmond's cold frustration is not a quality set apart from his artistic sensibility but rather actively affected by it:

> 'The desire to have something or other to show for his "parts"—to show something or other—had been the dream of his youth; but as the years went on the conditions attached to any marked proof of rarity affected him more and more as gross and detestable; like the swallowing of mugs of beer to advertise what one could "stand". If an anonymous drawing on a museum wall had been conscious and watchful it might have known this peculiar pleasure of being at last and all of a sudden identified—as from the hand of a great master—by the so high and so unnoticed fact of style'.

At times, the wariness of a more sprightly pilgrim than Isabel Archer will appear in a sarcastic comment on things as well as people. Mrs. Headway, in *The Siege of London* (1883), 'wished to study English life so that she might take possession of it: and to pass in among a hedge of bobbing rustics and sit among the monuments of the old Demesnes would have told her a great deal about English life'. But more characteristic of the tales of this period is an uncritical backcloth to a critical examination of the behaviour of European people. Rotten Row, in *Lady Barbarina* (1884) is as fresh and innocent as Hampton Court to the first passionate pilgrim fourteen years earlier:

> 'The wide long area of the Row, its red-brown surface dotted with bounding figures, stretched away into the distance and became suffused and misty in the bright thick air. . . . All this, however, was only a background, for the scene was before everything personal; quite splendidly so, and full of the gloss and lustre, the contrasted tones, of a thousand polished surfaces'.

A mixed attitude is more apparent in later work, as that *self*-suspicion seems to grow and to shadow Henry James' descriptive style with doubt. There is a significant instance in *The Tragic Muse* (written in 1888), where the phrase 'all corn-fields and magistrates and vicars', set in the midst of a sincere attempt at a brief tribute to historical imagination, suggests that the author is afraid of being thought ingenuous and so puts at least one admiring reaction within invisible inverted commas in order that it could, if challenged, be discarded as a deliberate joke :

> 'It was simply the sense of England—a sort of apprehended revelation of his country. The dim annals of the place were sensibly, heavily in the air—foundations bafflingly early, a great monastic life, wars of the Roses, with battles and blood in the streets, and then the long quietude of the respectable centuries, all corn-fields and magistrates and vicars—and these things were connected with an emotion that arose from the green country, the rich land so infinitely lived in, and laid on him a hand that was too ghostly to press and yet somehow too urgent to be light

It is a passage with all the glow of the authentic pilgrimage ; there is in it, however, a trace of self-consciousness suggesting that at any moment the passionate pilgrim may make himself and his passion the object of a piercing comment such as that which pins down for us the false dilettante Osmond : 'He has a great dread of vulgarity ; that's his special line ; he hasn't any other that I know of'

## THE SOULS OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Lay down the ancient fears
That do corrupt the years
And cast into a shade
The beauty of the dead.

From grey-faced stone the child
Leapt heavenly, undefiled,
And spread her morning wings :
Confine her not with things.

Two lovers lay as one
Beneath the midday sun,
The word made flesh in them :
Praise them not nor condemn.

Still and untroubled lay—
All sadness slid away—
The body of the queen :
Let that be which has been.

ROSEMARY ROBERTS

# THE TURN TABLE

## JOHN DUMERECQ

SHE was like a pin cushion, not in shape or appearance, but because she was always sticking pins into herself; and once she had taken the pins out of herself she stuck them into others. Cassandra had lived for nearly half a century; she had been married fifteen years and had four children, yet ever since her childhood she had stuck pins into herself and into others. It was not for a constructive purpose; she did not look upon herself as a conker, which by the addition of pins could be made into a toy table or chair; she was only a pin cushion, and not even a useful receptacle at that. No one else even consciously put pins into her, it was only in her imagination that his pin-sticking occurred.

If three or four people were together and two of them decided to go out for a walk and Cassandra was left behind with possibly one other, she would imagine it as a pin stuck into her, and although she had possibly no wish to walk, she took the first opportunity of pushing the pin deeper into her flesh, pressing it down until the head of the pin was lost and the blood flowed; not until blood flowed and the pain was unbearable did she try and remove the pin, and then stick it either into the person who upset her or into everyone who was at that time near her. If by chance the person who had offended did something especially to please her, or 'make up' for the offence, Cassandra would smother the person in tenderness and the cotton wool of her affection, even going out of her way to do something for her. So for days at a time she could be happy but each period was only another delay before the next attack. If you said to her casually 'Are you coming for a walk, Cassandra?' She would answer 'No'; but if you said, 'Will you come for a walk, Cassandra?' She would certainly go. If she telephoned you one day and asked you to play bridge or croquet or golf and it was impossible for you to go she would certainly reply 'Oh well, it doesn't matter, I can cancel my game'.

One day when her husband was in London Cassandra was worried because he had not returned for tea as he had promised to do, and when he eventually returned that evening he said he had been to the theatre.

'Who with?' she had casually asked him. It was his secretary, a woman of her own age; and this started an attack. Jealousy raged in her as scarlet fever might rage in a child; jealously consumed her as autumn consumed the beech trees, leaving nothing of the summer in them but the shape of the leaves themselves. All

night she silently but restlessly lay on her bed daggering herself with pins, and at the same time 'stabbing' her husband. At first, when he told her she had said nothing, but remained quite still. She was mentally looking round for the pins to dash into herself and her husband. Meanwhile it was a period of gestation; she was nursing the pain until in her own room she could bring it to birth. And then she vowed she would leave her husband the next day without a note, she vowed not to speak to him until something he said made her forgive him; she would never give way, and although on the morrow she expected that he would say something to please her, for she loved him still, she knew that

> All that was said
> The long day long
> Is always said;
> Yet not always said
> Every noon sun.

Although, in fact she would not forget it she might forgive it. The whole composition of her life was a pot-pourri of old offences, dried and truly rotten by now, but never forgotten, and every now and then she pulled one or other of them out of the muslin bag of her skin and set them before her nose, bringing back in their scent all the unpleasantness of circumstance. But happily among the dried petals were some whose scent still pleased her, scents of people and of things she had loved and perhaps still cared for a little. For it is impossible to be jealous without caring a little. No one is jealous without having some affection for someone or other of the persons concerned; and in her early life she had known desire coming up like the tide, washing round her feet, enveloping her entirely, so that she could hardly swim; and at the same time that she was almost drowned at sea, she was stranded on a single rock.

If she saw something she wanted just out of reach, she would never go and fetch it; never go half way to meet anyone to get the thing she wanted; never on seeing a lost possession floating on the surface of a stream go a little way into the river to retrieve it, so if it was not washed up on the bank she never saw it again. If someone asked her why she did not get the thing she wanted, why she did not see the person staying near her, she would reply that it had been impossible as it was not accessible, or the friend had not suggested a meeting.

And so she went on, squeezing the blood out of her life by her pins, killing her sleep with pinpricks, torturing her gaze on everyday things, seeing eventually, no one in the right perspective, least of all herself. As soon as you saw that something had upset her you imagined, on seeing her eyes harden, her hair standing on end, and her hands stretching out for a box of pins, stretching along the cushions for the pinbox or looking round for a work-bag where they were sure to be. One imagined her then retiring to her own

room, to her own arm chair, and one by one sticking the pins into her body and into the imaginary effigy of the person who had upset her. One may have imagined her actually having a replica, an effigy of herself like a doll in her own room, and effigies of those she knew most who were likely to offend her, all put away in her drawers, ready to be pulled out and stabbed on the least provocation. But it was on her own likeness that the most blood was smeared, the flesh most torn and the eyes most tortured. No one could pretend that she did it for pleasure, or that she enjoyed it; it was something she could not master, could not avoid; it was overpowering, a kind of disease to be conquered, if at all, by will.

For all the daggering of her own world and flesh, her death was unnoticed and unfelt almost by her own household; it was like the sun setting without clouds in the sky to reflect its going.

## HAMLET

Pity and fear
the beautiful prince
in loneliness of grief
with O his nimble word
and lightning fence
that pierced in all men else
to the inward of truth.
All lust unmasked, and treachery shown
its glass of shame; the blind eyes
opened, and hypocrisy's reward
his own base currency.
Bright thrusting thought
that touched true gold wrapped
in a player's heart, and grappled
as with unswerving steel
the loyalty of one only friend.
In all, the tragic
sanity of truth discovered,
but in the dazzle blind
to the doom of circumstance,
and, time's fool, falling
into the absolute of silence
unreprieved.
Pity and fear.

ROBIN ATTHILL

# THE ANSWER IS NOTHING

A. L. BARKER

I

TO be with Alwyn for any time at all, was to acquire an impression that life at its best was the size and fragility of a tea-cup, and at its worst was unmentionable. It was difficult to know what the fuss was about and why words like 'unemployment' and 'working classes' were even necessary. Alwyn chattered, light and swift as spray, and there were words which became her—meringues, *à deux*, pale mauve, *fleur de lis* and paralyse. A beautiful word, 'paralyse', and when Alwyn said, 'My dear, I was simply paralysed', there came a vision of arrested motion, ballerina's stillness in the midst of a tarantella.

On her twenty-first birthday, Alwyn's parents gave a party. They had a discreet lofty house with white windows and an avenue of limes. Some of Alwyn's friends used to feel a wave of annoyance when they smelt flowering limes because the scent reminded them of her. And Alwyn was so difficult to forget. As Louis Malmeady said, she was like a ringing in the ear.

Alwyn invited thirty friends—just intimates. On the night of the party she was pitched two notes higher than usual. Her voice was brittle and incessant as a piccolo.

She had taken great trouble with her dress. She meant it to be symbolical. It was of white silk, hand embroidered at every inch with minute pink roses. Whenever she moved, the roses were whirled into gusts and eddies.

She looked enchanting. Louis Malmeady's three chins quivered. He could not speak, he trembled with nausea and panic. It was terrible for a man like Malmeady to covet a woman like Alwyn, to hunger, thirst, and crave sugar candy.

But Alwyn was very happy. Even though, as she confided to some school-friends, she would no longer be a girl after tonight, but a woman grown, with responsibilities. She tried to frown a little because she was thinking of voting and an independent banking account. The school-friends laughed and said it was all silly. They were sure they hadn't felt the least different since they were twenty-one.

It was very hot that night. The long garden doors stood open and nobody could escape the scent of the lime-flowers. Who knows but the trees had come into the house and the frou-frou of dresses was the frou-frou of their leaves? Yet outside in the drive they stood silent, leaf upon leaf, ebony-black and still. 'There's a storm coming,' the people said when they stopped dancing or flirting or

playing games. They went in couples to look at the sky. ' Those awful limes,' they said, ' I'd have them down . . . they drug me . . . I can hardly think . . . does Alwyn ever stop talking ? '

But Alwyn was very happy. If this was being a woman, this mounting excitement, this gay self-assurance—well, she liked it. The pink roses were caught up in gusts, they went swaying, twirling, dipping, and Alwyn danced every dance. There were so many young men eager to put an arm round Alwyn's waist, lean over her and slide into a waltz. Imperceptibly her evening drifted into a succession of dancing-partners. She began to feel so strange ; as if she would never stop dancing, moving over the polished floor with complicated steps, hesitating, gliding on again, turning for no reason at all—sweetly indecisive as a blown leaf.

Those young men were continually offering her rainbow-coloured ices topped with angelica. And some brought her wicked little concoctions which she shouldn't even have tasted. Sometimes Alwyn refused.

Always the black and white of the dancing-partner was at her side, guiding her through the maze of dancers—her friends—a drift of shadows.

The coming storm lay damply on foreheads and limbs. Gaiety was touched by an old disquiet, kin to the restlessness of beasts. The guests wanted a brisk dance, something to quicken the air, so the little string orchestra struck up a gavotte. Alwyn was whirled away. Her feet tripped, tapped and pirouetted, her fine hair lifted like silk.

There never had been such a night for Alwyn. She began to lose sight of herself ; a strange heedless Alwyn took control, an Alwyn who drew all things to a focal point with her, a very important person.

On all sides faces were now swooping close, now swaying off into the distance. Bodiless faces ; they were just so much background to Alwyn. She was the centre ; from the beginning, daybreak and night ; the spring and summer seasons, autumn and heavy-handed winter ; storm, cataclysm, mountain avalanche—these heralded her coming-in ; the threaded moments ended in this fulfilment. All things were waiting under her hand, the smallest tight packed with treasure as a Chinese box.

Alwyn's partner guided her out to the terrace. They stood dazed in darkness close and furry, restless with nerve and pulse and constant change. The lightning banded the horizon with a white heat, brimmed it over like a crucible, so that even the edge of Alwyn's world foamed in its fullness.

Then the first thunder-clap came, almost overhead. Something immense dropped and rolled in the hollow skies. Echoes ran over the tops of the bending limes and Alwyn found herself in a windy nothing. She tried, in utter panic, to hitch herself on, to find some foothold in the emptiness. But all the little pegs and platforms of

her world gave way in her hands, broke under her feet. They were life-lines of tinsel. In the end, in company both good and bad, they dissolved with all other things into air. A cold wind took them off. There was nothing.

Less than a second, perhaps, the conviction held. Alwyn's companion bent hopefully towards her.

'What are you thinking?'

Alwyn laughed. 'Of nothing,' she said and danced a few steps by herself. She had already forgotten.

II

No one was free from Alwyn's voice that day. It flowed over them all, frilly and inevitable as the first returning wave at low tide. The maids in the attics heard it twinkling from the depths; the gardener in the farthest orchard heard it sublimated by the stream. Soon after dawn it started with the bright urchin-calls of birds; splintered the grey morning with silver; danced with the mounting noise of dust-pan and brush; skipped through slamming doors; was arrived long before hurrying feet, and led a chorus of rustling paper until at last its edge was dulled by the shutting of the boudoir door.

'Glory be it's not a wedding every day,' said Clara the under-housemaid.

'And since it is my wedding-day,' said Sandra, Alwyn's awesomely beautiful daughter, 'everything else should and shall go to hell.'

The morning was cyclonic, but by noon Alwyn's porcelain prettiness was brighter than ever. She was confident. The wedding would be perfect. Even the weather was on her side.

As she went through the lych-gate towards the stout little country church, there was a freshly scoured glitter to the ivy and a laundered look to the bonneted daffodils. Really, Alwyn thought with pleasure, it was exactly right.

The church was full when Alwyn entered. Her talk fell to a fluttering whisper, but she saw at a glance that they were there—a galaxy of names for the press to pour glitteringly in daily paper and glossy magazine.

The organist was playing softly, awaiting the bride's entry. The congregation rustled like a drift of leaves, its glances restless as a school of minnows, its thoughts flung wide like chaff.

Alwyn took a seat of honour, old Mrs. Lavenham, Sandra's immensely rich godmother, at her side. It required quick wits to conjure some understanding out of the old lady's asthma, but Alwyn was replying and mentally checking arrangements at the same time. Even so, she could not escape the embarrassment of the Christus.

It was a great sombre painting, richly fantastical, hanging over the altar. Alwyn never saw it without feeling her whole body blush gently. He hung there by His hands and feet, the poor spindle-shanked Christus, His ribs in sharp relief, His sad feet crossed so

that one nail could be driven through them both. Somehow Alwyn couldn't help feeling that it was a disgrace to the country and to civilization, the way He hung there, year after year. Even though it was religion, she always felt the picture was in bad taste.

She lowered her eyes. Old Mrs. Lavenham hissed, and Alwyn turned to see Charles, the bridegroom, enter.

Charles was handsome in a high Slavonic fashion. He moved as a beautiful bored jaguar paces a sunny cage, quite unnaturally lithe and correct. Alwyn's eyelids fluttered as she watched him go to his place by the altar. Once he glanced at the Christus ; then he bent his head to settle the white carnation in his button-hole.

Alwyn now began to smoothe her gloves until each finger shone in its cloudy kid. She felt heady. Her world soared, tier upon tier, white and fragile and sugary ; her world slid, fold upon fold, white and silken and rich ; her world flowed, chord upon chord, dark and honeyed and singing.

Alwyn was not prepared for Sandra's entry. The minutes were hurrying behind her back and she was still giddy from her first plunge, still trying, as a diver tries, to master the webbing water, the sanctity over her anticipation. For even now a church never failed to subdue the starling in Alwyn. Minor and shallow she might be, but she never questioned the stability and difference of God. It was the relic of an old fashion—the whalebone corset which was her essential stiffening.

Sandra came in on her father's arm and Alwyn knew again the excitement of parties, birthdays, balls ; that inward surging hollowness—the more intense because this was the greatest occasion since her own wedding.

She glowed at Sandra's perfection, gloried in every languid curve of satin. There was not the smallest flaw. Julian was still taut and slim. His morning suit expressed him ; cool, sober, a little stiff. Sandra was anchored beside his sobriety.

As Sandra approached the altar, the tableau there neared completion. The clergyman's black and white offered resistance to the crowding pagan colours of the church. Charles and Julian, with grey shadings and closer detail, coldly opposed the brilliant rags of saints and beggars in the stained glass windows. Sandra negatived them all.

Sea-like, her satin gown caught the light, spilled it, snuffed it out and tossed it, glowing again. Before that perfection of white, all colours—scarlet and cobalt, green and the settled bloom of oak—retreated, jangling.

Reaching Charles, Sandra appraised him, approved, and took her place at the altar. The organ-notes ceased, the air was left shattered and still singing. The service began.

Alwyn had been to no weddings since her own, and now she could remember only that. She and Julian in a London church, very fashionable, with a wealthy congregation at their backs. Herself in

white, smaller, slighter, without the long lines of Sandra's body. And Julian, just as grave, just as impeccable. She had listened to the words of the marriage service and being in love, had, for once, meant all she said. That day had been the best. By the morrow, something iron in Julian had cracked the porcelain in her.

Those words—they had been the first thing outside fashion and society which Alwyn had ever taken seriously. They had fallen from the lips of the Bishop like a rosary, nothing jarred. Alwyn had heard, remembered and answered them—' I will.'

' I do,' said Charles, without a tremor.

Alwyn watched Sandra. This was the moment. The first ball-dress, the first kiss, the presentation at Court, the coming of age—somehow they had not flown so high as when Alwyn answered the Bishop. Strange, perhaps. Alwyn had set more store by a parasol than a friendship, but in the matter of Julian she had not been herself just at first. Afterwards, of course, it was different. Because Julian was different, different from Alwyn's attractive miniature of him. But at the wedding, ' I will ' was never more deeply meant.

Sandra's eyelids drooped. One finger moved like a slow, small pendulum against the skirt of her satin gown.

' I will,' she said, her voice faint and a little out of patience. Then the pendulum again and an upward glance, bored as a yawn. For Sandra, the elaborate charade had entered a wordier, less spectacular phase.

Alwyn felt an urge to tears. For a moment she floundered in her bewilderment. It was so obvious that the clergyman and his words, the service and the ring, even perhaps Charles himself, meant nothing to Sandra. She was not thinking of them. And Alwyn, though she tried, could not imagine what Sandra was thinking in that moment.

It was quite certain, though, that the clergyman and his words, the service and the ring, even perhaps Charles himself, meant nothing, nothing at all.

## III

This is August and there is no wind. At noon there are silences ; water jazzes under the white sun, ants thread the dust. Daisies are sly, roses lavish ; the hot marigold burns, and burning, sheds no ash.

Alwyn has come to walk in the garden. She is alone, her clothes are black. She carries a striped sunshade.

The black dress is thin ; it has smoked over the pale flesh of her arms and neck. All the colour in the garden retreats from this blackness, leaving it solitary.

Now Alwyn's face holds not one expression but many. She will not recognize her solitude, carries with her a ring of feelings that are well-worn already.

Alwyn's husband died over a week ago. She still expects him to come to her over the grass, very grey in his tussore suit. She is

trying to realize that he will not sit opposite her at breakfast, spotless, silent, without the smallest deranging flame. At dinner his place is vacant, but she still sees his smooth head downbent, his hands in their white cuffs leisurely among the ordered silver.

It is twenty-five years since they were married.

In the rose-garden Alwyn sits down. The old wall casts a shadow, so she closes the sun-shade and folds her hands in her lap. One would think she had come to hear something.

A motor-bike bubbles in the distant lane. When that sound has died, silence and heat roll back like oil over a tilted board. Alwyn sits looking about her, irritated by the solitude. She frowns, her feet tap, her eyes flicker over the drugged roses, the smooth-turned earth, the rich old wall. Under the sun they are exploited. Each petal burns like wine, glows pink and living as the cheeks of running girls. The warmed earth sweeps roughly to the wall, throwing a wave of cinnamon against bricks bright as sunny apples.

Alwyn thinks she would like a flower for her dress, a pink rose against the black. She leaves her shady seat and singles one out. The flower is full and heavy, its stalk hostile. Alwyn bends the stem in her fingers, it half-breaks—a thorn sinks into her flesh.

She cries out and stands in the sunlight pressing her finger till the blood wells in a bright round bead. The sun finds no response in her black dress. It beats on her pale hair, on her red blood, on her ivory skin. But the black dominates every other colour. There is something black in the sunlight, something resistant.

The thorn has defeated Alwyn. It was only a whim that made her pick the flower. Now she is hurt and cross. She turns away ; all the fine lines on her face deepen ; her eyelids lower against the glare.

Drearily she picks up the sunshade and trails along in the shadow, poking at the earth as she goes. The half-plucked rose leans sideways on its splintered stem.

She hates being alone. All her life she has avoided it. This afternoon is an accident. There will be people for dinner. There are just these two hours to be endured.

Julian—how strange it is. All his clothes ; something must be done with them. Perhaps someone would like them. Julian had no hobbies. He did not collect stamps or stuffed birds or rare ivories. In his spare time he read French novels. There are stacks of them in the attics, but they can be sent to the church jumble sale. Or can they ?

Alwyn doesn't know. Julian never said anything. Sandra was the same. The two of them, they didn't seem to feel. Alwyn used to think sometimes they weren't there. It was very silly, of course, but really—she'd talk away for minutes on end, and they'd answer, a word here and there, until suddenly she knew they hadn't been listening. Although they sat so near, they were miles away. Alwyn could never understand it. For years that had been one of her problems. She dreaded it more than she dreaded dreaming.

Alwyn, in the tigrish heat, puts up her sunshade. She has come to a path between tall green walls of box, focussing on a fountain at the far end. Here the heat is rammed close. The sky lifts a million miles. Alwyn hurries because she does not like the smell of box. She reaches the end of the path. The fountain bursts sheer into a stem of water, hyaline, wavering. Ten feet up, the stem breaks to a dynamic flower, swift as spume, various as a rainbow.

How funny that Julian died putting his socks on ! He would never allow even his valet to see him in his underclothes. But they had all gone in and looked at him lying there in his silk underwear, like my son John with one sock off and one sock on. Alwyn couldn't help feeling embarrassed for him. She stood, not knowing what to say, and wishing he'd been dressed before it happened.

What was Sandra doing this afternoon ? Was she in town with Charles ? Was she in the park with Dennis the dachshund ?

Cook must be told not to serve any more ginger jellies—Julian loathed them. He had taken a dislike to pineapple too. They might try apricot for a change.

Alwyn frowns. How silly ! She was forgetting. Julian is dead ; it is no longer necessary to consider his likes and dislikes.

Julian loathed ginger jellies and red ties ; but now he doesn't care. He is down there. Alwyn looks at the green veins of moss between the paving-stones.

She thinks with a sudden terror—Julian in the dirt ! And something in Alwyn flinches because Julian was always so particular. He was more than particular, he was fanatical. When they dressed for dinner he always took longer than Alwyn. He used to build himself, garment by garment ; used to create from that thin steely body and those severe expensive clothes a complete gentleman. This gentleman was suave but not oily ; silent but not taciturn ; detached and parsimonious of effort as a cat is, but with no quality of slyness. The sight of his own hands among crystal and glossy linen pleased him as much as a bowl of daffodils on a sunny day, or swans drifting in sleep.

Alwyn finds she cannot imagine what has happened to Julian. It is frightening. Standing there in the sun by the fountain, Alwyn is frightened. Only a little while ago he was here. He was sitting on the terrace drinking his coffee and reading a novel.

Alwyn turns hurriedly. She looks on the ground—where is he now ? Nobody knows where he is, but they will say, ' He is dead,' as if the matter ended there. Alwyn clutches her sunshade and looks at the ceaseless fountain with wide open eyes. No one, she thinks, no one on the whole earth knows where Julian is. But Julian now is wiser than the bishops and the priests and the pope. He knows what happens to you when you die. He knows.

And suddenly Alwyn knows too. She sees it in the fountain, tossing beads of water, bright and useless and brief. She stands

under her striped sunshade in the afternoon heat and Alwyn knows, just for a moment, what happens to you when you die.

Then she turns and hurries back to the house. She must talk to somebody about something, quickly ; must talk about something, anything. She will telephone Sandra. She will say she wondered how Sandra was managing in all this heat and London must be unbearable ; and is Charles still so busy at the Foreign Office and that she has finally decided to go abroad for the winter.

By the time Alwyn reaches the terrace she is humming. She hums 'The Merry Widow' waltz.

## HIS FUR IS ON FIRE

Mother oh Mother ! I beg you bind
The wounds of my Savage ! He's yellow and black,
And glowering tall at the back of my mind
As he roars aloud in the chimney-stack.

He's dark, my Tiger, he claws with rage
Inside me, caught in the chimney's cage.
His fur is on fire and he cries in torment :
'Tug me out of my blistering garment !'

Hark to him calling you mother, his mother ;
Both of us desperate, how can you tell
One wild beast in pain from another ?
Save my Life that I love so well !

Spare your child and his terrible Twin !
The chimney is narrow, the womb's a prison.
I hear a bell tolling it's time to be gone ;
The storm blows out and the sun has risen.

Mother, he's dead, and his glorious coat
Is burnt to a cinder and covered with soot.
I stare and I stare at the chimney-stack
And pine for my Savage who can't come back.

LILIAN BOWES LYON

# NOT WITHOUT HONOUR

R. J. CHARLESTON.

'YOU called, Sir?', said the stenographer.

'Ah, yes, Miss Simpson, come in and sit down a minute, will you? I shall be ready to start in a moment.'

The stenographer obediently folded herself and her neat dark clothes into two right-angles on a hard chair. Her pencil was beautifully sharpened. She was a serious young woman. The minor prophet behind the desk continued with something or other he had been doing, and she noticed the expressionless top of his silvery head and the lively language of his plump hands as they rustled among his papers. He finished, and the focus of animation shifted from his hands, now still, to his little brown bright eyes.

'Shall we start?' he said. 'Head this please—"Pay and work, or Work and pay?" Capital P first, small w; then capital W and small p, though I doubt whether the significant point will be appreciated. People nowadays don't read, they gulp—like whales, and can't distinguish between large fish and small. Now then, take dictation, please.'

He got up from his seat and stood with his back to the fire-place. Then off he went—

'It is the conceit nowadays to think of work as a thing apart from its monetary remuneration; or rather to put first things first of monetary remuneration apart from work. "I want a job which will bring me £5 a week", says the young man of to-day, and leaves the nature of the job unspecified. To his forefathers, how utterly incomprehensible this attitude! A hundred years ago even, a mere three generations, a man was butcher, baker or candlestick-maker: to-day he is a wage-earner, an industrial worker, a hand. His great-grandfather had at his fingertips the making of some article from its rawest material to its most finished state: the great-grandson can be taught in a fortnight one process contributory to the manufacture (what a vicissitude that word has suffered, Miss Simpson! but one can hardly say machino-facture—too hybrid—and "machine facture" puts the emphasis where I don't exactly want it. Never mind, I will correct it if necessary in rough manu-script—machine-script, I suppose I should say. Right then—) manufacture of some un-understood, diabolically complicated article (a typewriter for instance, Miss Simpson) which we consider essential to our "standard of living", even though it may be apparently designed merely to cut short our said life, by over-milling our food or plainly by knocking us down in the street. The great-grandfather was a carpenter, say, from the moment he severed the

umbilical cord of family life and became apprenticed, and no world was conceivable to him as *his* world without it savoured of sawdust: the great-grandson learns in school enough of this and that to give him the impression he knows something, whilst ensuring that the conceit is not counterbalanced by any substance of knowledge (what system better calculated to produce ignorance without humility—surely the most dangerous form of ignorance?), and the young pup goes out into the world a dilution of a man, a mere colourless basic, well-suited to moulding, a potential industrial worker, forsooth—as a lump of putty is a piece of potential industrial material. Contrast with this characterless insipidity the double-distilled essence of the man whose knowledge is piped through a single narrow conduit, who knows what he knows intensely and to the depth of its potentialities, and who is content to know that he knows, in the widest sense—nothing. (I enjoy this, Miss Simpson. I always think how happy Carlyle must have been getting his thunder off his chest. Paragraph).

'An industrial designer design a chair? Certainly. He has seen a whole range of shapes of chairs, styles named after certain plodding ignorant artisan chair-makers of the past. There is no difficulty at all. I can easily turn you out a Chippendale style, with one or two modern improvements if you like. Oh, of course, there is that slight difficulty about the joints, but we can consult the works carpenter about structure. Ye Gods! He indeed has *seen* a chair. But Chippendale and a thousand unknown nameless Chippendales—they *knew* The Chair, knew it in the sense that a doctor knows the human body, within and without, and, more than that, with the added insight which is the prerogative of the creator. (Small c, Miss Simpson please. By rights, having dragged in the body, we should introduce God, but the blockheads nowadays think His presence automatically invalidates an argument. If you want to persuade them, leave God out and introduce His attributes in safe human terms—by all means call your artist a creator with a small c. Paragraph).

'And what is this secret of beautiful things and whole men? Very simple. Look to the work, and the rest will be added unto you. And in looking to the work, look to the *whole* work. It must be yours from start to finish. Those who work under you must work with you only because they do so in order that one day they may work *as* you. The journeyman must be potentially the master-craftsman. "But", you say, "how can I make wireless sets on that basis?" The problem is yours, but one thing may be said with certainty—if they cannot be made on that basis, they should not be made at all. Prepare to discard them. And before you wail at the deprivation, sit down and ponder strenuously with your inmost man (if your education has left him unstunned and in possession of his senses) what good the wireless has done for you. Throw it out of the window and learn to think for yourself. Even learn to sing.'

'That will do for the moment, Miss Simpson, thank you. Just type that much out and count the words. I don't want to go much above a thousand, and I want to think a bit more about the conclusion when I see the drift of this. The key, Miss Simpson, is responsibility, personal responsibility which builds the whole man. Not work for pay, but good work, worth-while work, responsible real human work. I shall want to know how much I can spread myself on that. I look forward to the afternoon. Thank you, Miss Simpson.'

* * * * *

'Yes, what is it? . . .', said the minor prophet, more than half-absorbed in his papers. He did not even notice that his secretary, in her dark tube-like skirt and clasping a sheaf of papers to her dark bosom, was hovering by the door in an unprecedented agitation.

'I want to give notice', said she in a low voice.

'Notice?', said the silvery head, lifted from the papers by an urgent combustion in the brain.

'Yes, . . . please . . . Sir', said the stenographer.

'But heavens! What's the matter? Am I not paying you enough, or something?'

'No, Sir. It's not that . . . It's this.'

The sheaf of papers changed hands.

'And what's this? . . . Bless my soul,' said the minor prophet, for the Serious Secretary had darted from the room.

In his hands he held the rough manuscript of his article.

## CHRISTIAN MARTYR

*Sebastian was shot, resuscitated; was finally clubbed*

The Moorish archers in the wood;
Black faces clammy in the sun—
Tusk-waving boar just risen mad;
Tied white to tree,—Sebastian.

Those hustling birds—slick arrows—romp,
And slap on navel, nipples, thighs:
The Guards to sweaty barracks thump.
Unharmed, the Roman's heart and eyes.

Sebastian lives another night,
Then's clubbed till mumbles every bone:—
But from the blue and reeling street
Christ hales his soul beyond the moon.

FRANCIS BERRY.

# SELECTED NOTICES

*The Free Society*. By John Middleton Murry. (Dakers, 12s. 6d.).

Of recent years, a new book by John Middleton Murry has tended to call forth some carping comment on the part of reviewers on a political change of front. Such comment would be all too easy to make on his new work, *The Free Society*, for in it Murry renounces the pacifism that has been his faith for many years, but it would be fatally easy because it is always valueless. 'To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often', wrote Newman, and it is perhaps significant that both he and Murry should have felt it necessary to write something in the way of an *apologia*. It is, however, unfortunate that Murry should have chosen this, literary criticism apart, his most important book, in which to write it, for an apologetic attitude only serves to make more pointed a change which might otherwise have passed almost unnoticed, so understandable a one is it to-day. In the light of present events, few could not applaud it.

Yet, if to criticise his change of heart is invalid, it is perhaps valid to criticise a certain lack of objectivity in his work: the reader is continually being drawn back from a contemplation of things, if not outside, at least greater than, himself to a consideration of Murry's own personal experiences. Whilst it is true that one knows best what one has experienced in one's own life, in philosophical, and even in political, thinking, an objective view and the transcending of the merely personal is essential. This is something which thinkers such as Murry often fail to realize. It may be that they have not been trained in philosophy and therefore come to it through experience rather than art; at any rate the empirical method is one which, in a book such as this, it is often a mistake to adopt.

Despite these shortcomings, however, *The Free Society* remains a fascinating and important book: perhaps one of the most important books *for* our time, because the problems which it presents have an immediate relevance for the world to-day. In this respect the title might almost be considered misleading, for although Murry would no doubt regard his analysis of the nature and structure of the free society itself as of as much value as his survey of the present situation, it is really the latter that gives his book its tremendous topicality and import. Even in the future, one cannot help feeling, the book will be remembered and read as a document of its time, and not as a philosophical study, for interesting as Murry's thesis is, on the philosophical side his ground is far less sure, whilst politically what he has to say has become to-day, with the advance of Communism everywhere and the menace of Russian power growing, suddenly vital.

In this book Murry formally renounces his pacifism and offers his support to any war that will put an end to war and preserve the life of the free society. He has taken this step because he believes that the next war must be a war with Russia which will almost certainly have to be fought if the free society is to be saved, and he contends that this war will veritably be 'a war to end war'. The victory of the free society will be the victory of brotherhood and peace. The avoidance of war breeds war; war must be abolished, not avoided. Few would disagree with this last statement; but whether war can ever abolish war is another matter. Certainly, the threat of war, even atomic war, is unlikely to do so. Murry's suggestion that Russia should be 'compelled to come in' to support an Atomic Authority to control the use of atomic power and to prevent another war from ever taking place in the future is an optimistic one; it is unlikely that anything short of actual military defeat will make the Russians, who may, after all, already possess the atomic bomb, relinquish their claims. Nor is there much hope that the Russian people would rise against their leaders and overthrow them: the impossibility of any ideas or ideals ever being

filtered through to those behind 'the iron curtain' is only too apparent. Murry would say that if the Russians cannot be prevailed upon by the threat of war to abandon their present policy, then war must be undertaken against them, and this 'one just war' will assuredly abolish war forever. Possibly it will, but only because one half of the world will be wiped out of existence by the other half, and can we be so sure that it will not be our half? Alternatively, it is just conceivable that atomic warfare may not be used in the next war, just as gas was not used in the last. If this were the case, war would hardly be abolished, but would remain, with all the dread possibilities of the use of atomic power, as something which could always be resorted to again if all else failed. These are grave questions, and questions without easily foreseeable solutions.

Most people would agree with Murry's demand for the establishment of an Atomic Authority to control the use of the atomic bomb, but few would agree as to how it can be established. His own suggestion that it should be comprised of a body of scientists has a faint irony about it. Even if the scientists were responsible for giving the world the secret of atomic power, it is hardly likely that any nation, any politician or dictator would listen to them. Scientists may well be the most disinterested people in the world, and therefore the most reliable, but that fact will not, unfortunately, constitute authority, even if it constitutes power. It is in a case such as this that Murry's ideals tend to run away with him.

Nevertheless, in this part of his book Murry does do more than most writers are willing to do to-day—he faces the problem of Communism without flinching. His book is valuable as a grave warning of the great responsibilities which confront us to-day, and makes good corrective reading for the many 'sentimental Communists' in our midst, who, born in a free society, talk blithely of Communism as being the fulfilling of a spontaneous desire to be free.

On other fronts, he is open to greater criticism. His plea for a positive faith in the survival of our own free society is undoubtedly strongly-worded, and cannot fail to bring hope and encouragement to even the hardest of hearts cast down by news of crisis at home, but in his analysis of his subject he is often lacking in both logic and a due sense of reality. It becomes increasingly clear to all who would have eyes to see that a vague humanism, based on ill-defined 'Christian principles' is not enough: our salvation can lie only in a positive belief in the only means of salvation we have—Christ Himself. Murry speaks of the free society as being derived from the original inspiration of Christianity, but yet condems the Church which was, after all, solely responsible for the transmission of that inspiration to the world and, indeed, to Murry himself. It appears to be all too easy to overlook this fact. Nor are 'conscience' and 'moral law' terms which can be used vaguely. In this respect much of what Murry writes has the power to sweep his readers upward on a rush of sympathetic feeling and agreement, but on a deeper analysis proves curiously disappointing: it will not hold water. One feels that his overwhelming convictions of what he feels *should* be right have overcome his sense of what perhaps *may* be right.

In one breath he condemns the Church as intolerant, and *in* the next demands intolerance of the intolerant, which is, surely, sawing off the branch on which he is sitting. The Church cannot afford to be tolerant of those that would destroy her any more than Murry, the apostle of the free society, can afford to be tolerant of Russia. Nor is the ideal of the Christian society on earth one which the Church rejects, as Murry would suggest: rather it is *the* ideal of the Word made flesh—'Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven' is not an empty phrase but a living plea, and what is God's will on earth if it is not the Christian society? If the record of the Church is by no means unblemished, nor is the record of any human society: her ministers, like all human beings, are fallible, but that does not make the truth she teaches a lie. If Murry cites Cromwell as an upholder of tolerance, it might be as well for him to remember that if Cromwell's ideal was tolerance (but, let it be noted, a limited tolerance) he was continually compelled to curtail that ideal by the

need for military power and authority. And surely there is something a trifle absurd about Murry's pre-occupation with the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, which he takes to be the cardinal doctrine of the Church. The significance of his reasoning here is, to one reader at least, baffling.

Yet, in spite of Mr. Murry's fallacies and failings, *The Free Society* is a book that has the power to make us think, and that, in these days of escapism, is something. Although the thought may be painful, it can never fail to be rewarding.

*The Classical Moment.* By Martin Turnell. (Hamish Hamilton, 12s. 6d.).
*La Vie de Jean Racine.* By François Mauriac. (Librarie Plon 45 fr.).

Taken together, M. Mauriac's life and Mr. Turnell's study make a reasonably complete 'life and works'. The labour is well and moreover suitably divided, and one is left with the impression that if after this combined operation Racine does not yield his secret, we must give up. For although Racine lived flood-lit at Versailles, we know him no more than we know Shakespeare. What we know of him, Mr. Turnell frankly says, we do not like, and M. Mauriac softens the undeniable truth by suggesting that our ignorance of Racine is a measure of his pre-eminence. The contrast between the calculating prig and the poet does not predispose one to understand him, and makes the clearest of poets the most 'difficult'.

Perhaps wrongly, for they have written fully and well, the impression persists that neither M. Mauriac nor Mr. Turnell (no one when all is said and done) really has anything to say about Jean Racine. For although M. Mauriac's *Vie* is excellent reading, it turns, as one closes the book into a *vita*, the life of a very remote and famous man, one of those lives that tell us much about the author and the Christian religion, and provide the skeleton of the subject's career, and his ultimate reconciliation with the true religion. Something of the same thing is true of Mr. Turnell, though obviously in a different sense, since his preoccupation is with the plays rather than the life. It is the background, the 17th century, the changes and modifications in politics and society, in the view of man and the individual which he sees reflected in the work of Racine. This is no doubt emphasized by the fact that Mr. Turnell has prefaced the study of Racine with an introduction to the 17th century, and two very good, approach shots through the work of Corneille and Molière. Quite rightly he calls his book *The Classical Moment*. But Jean Racine still escapes us, and the fault is his own.

The trouble, if the word is not misleading, can be seen very distinctly where both authors establish the *sincerity* of Racine's conversion, when, at the age of thirty-eight he returned to the practice of his religion (and *practice* literally, is the right word, for he practised daily). All the ties which he had formed and which could be interpreted to interfere with his practising, were cut, with the same indifference and calculation with which he cut the ties of his youth on ceasing to practise his religion. It is difficult to convey the objectivity of the performance. The word *sincerity* seems rather to get in the way, for it carries with it such an aroma of sincere agnosticism. With Racine, the problem of sincerity seems hardly to arise, and in the quick change from man of the world (not *roué*, surely, as Mr. Turnell suggests) into the mature *dévot* the determination of the change is on the other side of sincerity. The 17th century bristles with the phenomenon, and it is doubtful whether anything would be added to Saint-Simon's description of Mazarin's son-in-law, by insisting that this converted Croesus, living withdrawn on his properties for forty years, was *sincere*.

As Mr. Turnell concludes by saying, Racine's death 'is more than the end of an age; it is the end of a whole phase of human experience'. And he goes on to point out that the 'divorce between reason and passion' that was to take place in the following century stamps the new age. This is so important that it might well have been developed at greater length in the introduction.

It seems to lie at the source of the trouble, and carefully considered might perhaps indicate the lines along which an approach to Racine might be possible. Unfortunately the question is immensely complicated by the presence of Jansenism in Racine. The present writer says the *presence* of Jansenism, because it is possibly something distinct from Racine, however far back it goes in his life. M. Mauriac, for reasons of his own, emphasizes the ' Jansenist Racine ' (*Phèdre*); Mr. Turnell does not give it the same prominence, and confirms the present writer's *impression*. And in this connection it would be necessary to re-examine Sainte-Beuve's view (in the introduction to Port Royal) that the sudden collapse of belief and authority in the succeeding century (the divorce between reason and passion) can hardly be understood without Port Royal, for Sainte-Beuve argues that Port Royal was one of the principal sources of the disintegration of belief.

Mr. Turnell sums up his approach to the plays when he says, ' I think we must conclude that Racine had come to feel that his great hope—the creation of a Christian Society on the ruins of the society analysed in the secular plays—was not destined to be realized '. This is clearly a possible interpretation, fully and interestingly argued by Mr. Turnell. But he goes on to add that Racine's pessimism has been ' abundantly justified ' by history. There Mr. Turnell exposes the dangers of his approach. ' Nor can we overlook ' he finally says, ' the immense responsibility of the Roi Soleil for the fact that the same evil took root in a neighbouring country '. This oblique reference is to Hitler, and not to the little Versailles and that roccoco world which was the immediate fruit of the Roi Soleil. And in fact Mr. Turnell's chapter on *Athalie and the Dictators*, with its use of ' resistance ' ' democratic leaders ' and so on, makes it seem that he would agree with M. Mauriac who holds that ' Racine a conçu avec beaucoup de netteté ce que Nietzsche devait appeler un jour la morale des maîtres '. It would be a mistake to imagine that Nietzsche merely *named* a disease. His diagnosis was provocative.

The relevance of *Athalie* appears to lie rather along the path indicated by Sainte-Beuve, when he said that there was really only one character in the play: God. But although Mr. Turnell's quotes Sainte-Beuve approvingly, it is not clear that he really agrees. In Nietzsche's world, however, ' God is dead ', and that is the difference between *Athalie*, and the *morale des maîtres*, a difference which it is only misleading to ignore, even for a moment, even though it does not at first touch the contemporary reader. Moreover, in his introduction, Mr. Turnell sets down very clearly the importance of authority and *les règles* for the whole century. They were accepted, he says because they were considered reasonable, because they were reasonable. This is perfectly true, and yet it does not cover quite everything. It is too limited a statement.

Both M. Mauriac and Mr. Turnell read *Athalie*, and in particular the fourth act, as an attack on Absolute Monarchy, and no one would deny that it can be read as such. The present writer can only say that he finds the interpretation credible, but unconvincing. Their terminology gives the impression of coming from another age. Here is the crucial text:

> De l'absolu pouvoir vous ignorez l'ivresse
> Et des lâches flatteurs la voix enchanteresse.
> Bientôt ils vous diront que les plus saintes lois
> Maîtresses du vil peuple, obéissent aux rois ;
> Qu'un roi n'a d'autre frein que sa volonté même ;
> Qu'il doit immoler tout à sa grandeur suprême ;
> Qu'aux larmes, au travail, le peuple est condamné,
> Et d'un sceptre de fer veut être gouverné.

It was natural that the passage should be applauded noisily in the days of *Figaro*, and one can see that Fouché might threaten to forbid *Athalie*. But when M. Mauriac turns back, and thinks Louis XIV must have ' dressé l'oreille ', the present writer finds himself in a different world, in the world

where Bossuet and Fénelon used similar language, where Louis XIV listened, not with his ear cocked for sedition but with complacency. He had learnt to distinguish with all the necessary clarity between authority and power. His authority was inviolable, absolute monarchy was divine, and he was annointed. He withstood the Pope, and Bossuet drew up the Gallican articles. But he warned the Duc de Bourgogne of the dangers of power.

Athalie was in no position to listen to such talk, for Athalie was an *usurper*, she had usurped the power of God, she had usurped power, and she could not usurp authority, for the simple reason that authority cannot be usurped. Napoleon drew the distinction very neatly when he said that he could have retreated to the Pyrenees had he been his own grand-son ; as it was he had to abdicate in Fontainebleau. Authority lasts longer than power.

This may seem to be a boring, scholastic quibble ; but, on the contrary, it is exactly the same point as Mr. Turnell's point, when he says that after Racine, the world was changed by the divorce of passion and reason. The sphere in which the change was first to make itself felt, was in politics, because men lost the sense (the feeling, passion) of authority. What happened can hardly be indicated in a few lines, but it seems fairly certain that authority disintegrated into *les règles* on the one hand, and into power ; reason pursued the rules and the laws, and intelligent men pursued power. Of course, this had always been done ; but the scale changed. ' Nietzsche, au dix-septième siècle, n'eut scandalisé personne en rappelant que faire oeuvre de savant ou d'artiste, c'est faire oeuvre de subordonné, et que le gouvernement des hommes est une autre histoire '. And M. Mauriac goes on to suggest that Racine would have agreed in one sense, but that another part of him had taken sides with Port Royal and Joad[1] (whose speech is quoted above), against Athalie and Louis XIV. It has, however, been maintained that Joad is Bossuet. Possibly the introduction of Nietzsche introduces confusion, or at least leaves it open to doubt whether the 17th century, and Racine in particular can be read in these terms. Nietzsche's verbal agreements with Bossuet need to be read with care.

The disintegration of Athalie's personality which Mr. Turnell analyses so well seems to fit her position as an usurper. So that when Mr. Turnell points out that her dream is an ironic portrait of herself—*pompeusement parée*, with all the outward insignia of authority—and when she reports the words spoken to her in the dream by her mother, Jezabel :

> Le cruel Dieu des Juifs l'emporte aussi sur toi

it is possible that it is not her power that is failing (this is made fairly clear in the earlier part of the speech), but that she is profoundly unsettled by the consciousness that without authority, power is more than ever precarious.

> Un songe (me devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe ? )

Is it only a dream ? Or is there really a God, the God whom Sainte-Beuve names the only character in the play ? In this crucial passage it appears almost essential to make the distinction between authority and power.

From the same point of view, it might be asked whether the picture of Racine consciously aware of the impossibility of re-creating a Christian society carries conviction. M. Mauriac, somewhat hesitantly, quotes Segrais' report that La Rochefoucauld was thinking of Racine and Boileau when he remarked on the misfortune of having only one line of *esprit*. ' Tout leur entretien ', Segrais adds, ' ne roule que sur la poésie '. It must be admitted that everything else M. Mauriac writes confirms Segrais' remark. Their expeditions into other spheres, the poor figure which they cut when following the King's headquarters as historiographers, must have strengthened a natural inclination.

' Now one of Racine's most startling innovations was not merely to shift the drama from the outer to the inner world, to transform the Social Man into the Individual Man ; it was to make the inner drama his *exclusive* preoccupation,

[1] Not the Professor.